

Understanding Gandhi

Gandhians in Conversation
with Fred J Blum

Usha Thakkar
Jayshree Mehta



This book is a collection of interviews of six of Mahatma Gandhi's closest associates—J.B. Kripalani, Raihana Tyabji, Dada Dharmadhikari, Sushila Nayar, Jhaver Patel and Sucheta Kripalani. The interviewees reflect on Gandhi's ideas in the light of changes that took place in India after Independence.

These interviews have been conducted by Fred J Blum (1914–1990), an academician and consultant to the US Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, whose lifelong commitment was to understand Gandhi's approach to social, economic and spiritual issues.

The book provides glimpses of Gandhi's ideas and working relationship with his colleagues who came from a wide range of backgrounds, professions and geographical regions. It also brings out the thoughts of Gandhi and his followers on several important issues such as *Satyagraha*, non-violence, *Brahmacharya*, spirituality and fasting. This blend of an intimate knowledge of Gandhi and the reflective hindsight gives the book a unique vantage point that promotes a holistic understanding of Gandhian thought and philosophy.



Understanding Gandhi

Gandhi in Contemporary India

Edited by Dr. R. S. Khanna

Foreword by Dr. R. S. Khanna

Introduction by Dr. R. S. Khanna

Chapter 1: Gandhi and the Indian National Movement

Chapter 2: Gandhi and the Indian Constitution

Chapter 3: Gandhi and the Indian Economy

Chapter 4: Gandhi and the Indian Education

Chapter 5: Gandhi and the Indian Society

Chapter 6: Gandhi and the Indian Religion

Chapter 7: Gandhi and the Indian Culture

Chapter 8: Gandhi and the Indian Literature

Chapter 9: Gandhi and the Indian Art

Chapter 10: Gandhi and the Indian Music

Chapter 11: Gandhi and the Indian Dance

Chapter 12: Gandhi and the Indian Cinema

Chapter 13: Gandhi and the Indian Theatre

Chapter 14: Gandhi and the Indian Sports

Chapter 15: Gandhi and the Indian Games

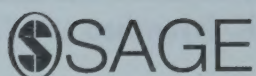
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EDITED BY

Usha Thakkar
Jayshree Mehta



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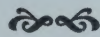
Foreword by Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh 20

Acknowledgements 20

*To all those who struggle for a just society,
and in particular,
the late and much-missed
Usha Mehta*

1. Introduction 1

2. Food for Thought (191) 11



3. J.R. Kripalani 39

4. Rathana Tyabji 125

5. Gada Dharmaadhikari 249

6. Susilla Nayar 361

7. Jhansi Patel 373

8. Jacheta Kripalani 479

Contents

<i>Foreword</i> by Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xix
1. Introduction	1
2. Fred J. Blum (1914–1990)	53
3. J.B. Kripalani	59
4. Raihana Tyabji	155
5. Dada Dharmadhikari	243
6. Sushila Nayar	301
7. Jhaver Patel	351
8. Sucheta Kripalani	409

<i>Glossary</i>	523
<i>Bibliography</i>	531
<i>About the Editors</i>	539
<i>Index</i>	541

Foreword

A STUDENT OF GANDHI is puzzled by many aspects of his life and legacy. Gandhi said that religion and politics were inseparable and that his own politics was motivated and shaped by his religion. But he also insisted that the state must be thoroughly secular, and should not have any formal ties with or give any kind of political or financial support to religious institutions. He was committed to non-violence and its 'absolute efficacy'. But he made several exceptions to it in personal and political life and gave it a kind of militancy that deeply worried and even alienated some of the traditional Christian, Jain and even Hindu votaries of non-violence. Gandhi undertook fasts, even fast unto death, that were *prima facie* coercive, but he insisted that they were wholly non-violent and did no more than exert 'pure' moral pressure on their intended targets. He was deeply religious, but also claimed to be a scientist engaged in 'experiments with truth' with a view to arriving at experimentally corroborated scientific principles of a new moral and social order. He appealed to what he

took to be the central values of Hinduism to attack its ugly social customs and practices, and argued from within the Hindu tradition. However, he also appealed in the manner of Enlightenment thinkers to 'universal reason' and enlightened world opinion and judged the tradition by their standards.

Gandhi's political life and influence too raise puzzling questions. Although the Left was highly critical of some of his beliefs and actions, it remained closely associated with him and some even came under his intellectual spell. Jawaharlal Nehru was highly critical of some of Gandhi's views and some aspects of his style of leadership and was offered an influential constituency by the Left. He not only never left Gandhi, but under his influence moderated some of his socialist aspirations and developed a markedly spiritual outlook of the Gandhian type towards the end of his life. He told Louis Fischer in 1948 that as he grew older, he felt drawn to 'Christ and Buddha, especially the Buddha' and moved closer to Gandhi. Jayaprakash Narayan, who was an even stronger critic of Gandhi, parted company with him for some time. Yet he not only continued to be haunted by him, but became an ardent Gandhian barely a decade after his death. Even M.N. Roy, the strongest critic of Gandhi and whom he regarded as his most dangerous opponent, not only paid him a moving tribute but borrowed his ideas such as decentralization, partyless democracy, the need to build up a cadre of committed and locally based social workers and the importance of personal example. Like Nehru, Narayan and Roy, scores of prominent socialists and communists who rejected many of Gandhi's

ideas never really managed to break out of his personal and ideological spell.

Why the Left, especially the Hindu Left, felt drawn to Gandhi is a difficult question that has received little attention. It is, of course, true that his hold over the Indian masses was so powerful that no one dared challenge him, and in any case he was shrewd enough to outsmart anyone who did, as Subhas Bose painfully realized. Many Leftwing leaders with political ambitions, therefore, thought it prudent not to fall foul of him. The Left also knew that its best hope of propagating its relatively unfamiliar ideas and policies lay in securing his patronage by means of quiet persuasion and persistent pressure.

All this, however, represents only part of the story. Both Gandhi and the Left did, of course, need and use each other. Nevertheless, as the examples of Nehru, Narayan, and others show, they were bound to him by deeper bonds. The bonds, further, were not entirely personal and emotional, for many on the Left did not enjoy the kind of intimacy with Gandhi that Nehru, Narayan, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and others did. The Left was morally overwhelmed by the fact that while they were content to preach their doctrines, Gandhi actually lived by his, and that his concern for the poor and his critique of British colonialism were in some respects deeper than theirs. It also seems to have felt that he had raised basic questions about the nature of man and the character of Indian society which they had long ignored and with which they needed to come to terms. Even as Marx claimed to discover a radical kernel underneath Hegel's apparently conservative vocabulary, many on

the Left felt that Gandhi's apparently conservative and religious form of thought had a radical and secular content which they could ease out and build upon. Obviously none of these and other explanations fully account for the Left's fascination with Gandhi. That only shows that the question deserves far more attention than it has so far been given.

Gandhi enjoyed the loyalty and support of both the Left and the Right, the intellectuals and the masses, the Westernized as well as the traditionalist intellectuals, the conservative as well as the radical masses, the industrialists and the workers, the landlords and the landless workers, and various groups. Although no group of Indians, not even the upper and middle peasantry whose life-style he symbolized and who were his most loyal supporters, was entirely happy with all his ideas and actions, each felt able to accept enough of them to give him its allegiance and support. As a result Gandhi enjoyed their loyalty and love and was able to hold them all together in a way no one before had been able to do.

This is apparently puzzling, for it is not clear how one man could build bridges between such diverse groups of people. In order to answer it satisfactorily, we must examine the manner in which he went about cultivating different constituencies and appropriately reformulating his programme and vocabulary. He began his political life in India by organizing and winning over the textile workers in Ahmedabad, one of the most industrialized cities in India. In so doing, he demonstrated his concern for the industrial workers in general and sent out appropriate messages all over India. He then went about championing

the causes of other groups such as agricultural workers (Champaran), Muslims (Khilafat movement), peasants (Bardoli), middle classes (Non-cooperation Movement) the poor and the lower middle classes (the Salt *Satyagraha*) and the scheduled castes (Vaikom *Satyagraha* and his 'fast unto death' in 1932). Each of his *satyagrahas* took up the cause of and consolidated his hold over a particular constituency and broadened his political base. Each was carefully conceived and formed part of a larger strategy of mass mobilization. Since the interests of different groups conflicted, Gandhi resisted the pressure from the Left to offer a clear-cut socio-economic programme. He knew that such a programme would break up the delicate and precarious unity he had forged among them.

We also need to analyse Gandhi's rich and complex language of discourse that enabled him to communicate with different constituencies in their native idioms. He knew that his followers came from different economic, social, religious, educational and cultural backgrounds, that they lacked a common language of communication, and that he was the first political leader in India to bring them all together. He also knew that he had to reassure such mutually hostile groups as the industrialists and their workers, the rich landlords and their land-hungry workers, the Westernized middle classes and the conservative masses, and the high-caste *Brahmins* and the untouchables. Accordingly, he developed a language of discourse that allowed him to speak to each group in its own idioms and also left him enough room to escape when the idioms conflicted. Gandhi's speeches at the time of Vaikom *Satyagraha* are a

brilliant example of how he placated both the orthodox *Brahmins* and the impatient untouchables.

It is striking that while he dominated pre-Independence India, he became a solitary and marginal figure soon after Independence. His countrymen who had once adored him grew tired of him, and some even wished his death. 'Let Gandhi die' was a popular slogan in Delhi during his last fast. And Justice Khosla had no doubt that had Godse been tried by a jury, he would have been acquitted! Soon after 1947, India embarked upon a path of development to which Gandhi was totally unsympathetic. And his old comrades adopted a life-style wholly opposed to the one he had long advocated and practised. Neither encountered opposition from the masses who had for nearly three decades adored his simple and austere life. Gandhi's schools and *ashrams* were also swept away, and his passionate concern for the poor, his plea for the development of the villages, and the tradition of social service that he had assiduously nurtured were all abandoned or diluted. Even the Gandhian language of discourse was reduced to an esoteric dialect spoken by a small and understood by an even smaller minority.

It is not easy to explain all this. No doubt, Gandhi's ideas were difficult to practise and had been resisted even during his life time, and bore only limited relevance to the huge political, economic and social problems of independent India. One would have thought, however, that the process of de-Gandhification would have begun after at least a decent interval and encountered some sustained opposition for at least a few years. Instead, it started and gathered

momentum from the very day India became independent, as if the country had suddenly woken up from a long Gandhian nightmare and could not wait to make a clean break with its past.

While one can see why the new leadership was anxious to marginalize Gandhi, it is difficult to explain the attitude of the orthodox Gandhians. Barring a small group of committed men and women, hardly any of them continued his great work in the villages, acted as the moral conscience of the nation, or raised their voice against the policies of the new government. None, again, conducted *satyagrahas* against glaring social and economic injustices at the national and local levels or even built up a dedicated cadre of workers. Among the scores of able leaders Gandhi had trained, none even reinterpreted his thought in a manner that connected with the problems of independent India.

Vinoba Bhave was the only obvious exception. And even he was a pale and barely recognizable copy of the original. He relied on moral persuasion and never forced an issue, organized a boycott, demanded impartial inquiries, or launched *satyagrahas*. He never built up an organization or created a cadre of dedicated workers, and remained little more than a one-man pressure group. He travelled from village to village as if he alone had the power to persuade people, and dissipated his energies. He lacked Gandhi's fierce sense of justice, uncompromising commitment to the poor, capacity to forge brilliant and evocative symbols and flair for action. Unlike Gandhi, who freely used the material resources of prominent industrialists but never hesitated to attack their lack of patriotism and the capitalist

system, Vinoba was overwhelmed by the attention paid to him by Nehru and Indira Gandhi and could not even protest against the Emergency. Not surprisingly, he remained a politically marginal figure whose voice could not frighten the government or command its attention.

The absence of any kind of systematic and nationwide Gandhian movement in independent India cannot be explained in terms of the personal limitations of individual Gandhians, for not all of them were devoid of the qualities of leadership and, in any case, leadership does not precede but grows out of a social movement. Nor can it be explained in terms of the ethos of post-Independence India. Although the new political leaders rejected many of Gandhi's ideas, they continued to swear by his concern for the poor and the 'downtrodden'. The Gandhians could have capitalized on and built a movement around it. Nor could the absence of a movement be explained by pointing to political groups and parties that had taken over Gandhi's social and economic concerns and thereby rendered a separate Gandhian movement superfluous. Apart from the communists, no other political party had taken serious interest in them, and even the communists were mainly focused on the industrial working classes. There was thus ample room for an independent Gandhian movement.

Gandhi's close associates, who survived him by several years, are among those best equipped to help us answer these and related questions. They knew him well, and had a good understanding of his thought. Later in life they also had the opportunity to reflect on his ideas without being

overwhelmed by his presence and in the light of the turn India took after his death. This blend of an intimate knowledge of Gandhi and the benefit of reflective hindsight gives them a unique vantage point. Fred J. Blum interviewed twenty-four such men and women at length and left behind valuable material. Usha Thakkar and Jayshree Mehta consulted it, and selected six of the most interesting interviews for inclusion in the volume. Like them I had the opportunity to read the transcripts of all the twenty-four interviews, and agree with their judgement. They locate the interviews in the historical context and show with great care in their Introduction the light they throw on Gandhi's life and legacy. This excellent volume fills a gap in the extensive literature on Gandhi. It provides valuable information and insights and assists a balanced and just critical assessment of him. As the editors show, Gandhi still has much to offer to contemporary India's struggle to create a just society and a healthy and self-critical political culture.

Prof. Lord Bhikhu Parekh
University of Westminster

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1

Introduction

Why Gandhi



THE WORLD AWAKES everyday to new horizons opened by technology and new discoveries made by science; it also awakes to painful realization that various divides within and among the societies are not getting narrow. Amidst political unrest, economic inequality and social discrimination human race seeks some rays of hope, and one such ray is the life and work of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Leaders like Gandhi constitute the moral capital of humanity, and persons as well as societies all over the world draw strength from his ideas and work especially during crises. Plays like '*Mahatma vs Gandhi*' and films like '*Lage Raho Munnabhai*' and '*Gandhi, My Father*' never fail to attract critics as well as ordinary people. Courses in Gandhian Studies have become popular in academic institutions in India and abroad.

Gandhi, though assassinated by a fanatic on 30 January 1948, lives on in myriad ways. He finds his supporters

in various ideologies and movements from local to global levels. His ideas of peace and non-violence rise like phoenix from the ashes of various squabbles, conflicts and wars. His ideas can be criticized as utopian; his fads may be discounted as his idiosyncrasies; and some of his decisions may be found illogical. And yet, without Gandhi what would we be? His words and deeds made difference to our thinking and our being. He never claimed to be a thinker, and yet his philosophy engages the best minds of the world. He never called himself a messiah, and yet the tormented humanity finds solace in him. He, at times, even comes out as an amalgam of contradictions. He brings a revolution but in a completely non-violent manner; he visualizes the impossible but finds ways to reach there; he is in politics but thinks and acts only in terms of ethics; he reasons but based on faith; and he presents economics but based on values and not on prices.

The very fact that he is remembered, respected, and even criticized or idolized indicates that he has amazingly become integrated in our life, consciously or unconsciously. We may praise him or criticize him; we cannot overlook the fact that the issues and the questions he raised and the ideals he tried to implement are of crucial importance to mankind. The political map has changed from his times, the economic scenario is struggling to absorb the new unleashed forces; and yet the ethical and moral issues he raised remain fundamental; the questions he raised for social, political and economic justice relevant.

If we have some desire to make the world we live in a just and equitable place, it becomes imperative to have some understanding of him.

How does one understand Gandhi, who left an indelible mark on the lives of millions? The question has generated an intriguing and engaging exercise among the intellectuals and the activists all over the world. So much has been written on and by him. The discourses on his ideas have been stimulating and tributes to his humane qualities, touching. Still the possibility of exploring his life and work has not lost excitement; primarily because he had described his life as an experiment with truth, and such an experiment always has a great promise for mankind. Hence, the exercise of understanding Gandhi remains fascinating and meaningful.

Importance of the interviews



One finds a number of approaches to understand Gandhi's thoughts like the nationalist, the Marxist, the oriental, the post-colonial and the subaltern. Various scholarly discourses have been written on Gandhi, his philosophy and his work. Gandhi's life continues to fascinate people and his ideas have not ceased to attract them. He remains transparent and real, worldly wise and yet unattached. He is a saint, a politician, a crusader against injustice, and a reformer. In fact his multi-splendoured personality manifests itself in different ways and simultaneously earns laurels and criticisms for him. To quote Romain Rolland:

He has not only been the spirit of active life which has breathed into the peoples of India the proud consciousness of their unity, of their power, and the will to their independence. He has renewed, for all the peoples of the West, the message of their

Christ, forgotten or betrayed. He has inscribed his name among the sages and saints of humanity; and the radiance of his figure has penetrated into all the regions of the earth.

(Radhakrishnan 1949: 255)

On the other hand, Lord Wavell, Viceroy of India from October 1943 to March 1947, described him as 'a malevolent old politician' and 'a very tough politician and not a saint' (Moon 1973: 236). Winston Churchill in his speech to the West Essex Conservative Association on 23 February 1931 called Gandhi 'a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace'. (Templewood 1954: 54)

Ernest Barker, after meeting Gandhi, found in him St. Francis and St. Thomas Aquinas mixed with the man of practical affairs and legal training. 'The mixture was the essence. What he was to the world, and what he could do for the world, depended on his being more things than one' (Radhakrishnan 1949: 60). He had his various ways to deal with the situations and crises, and his guiding stars were the principles of truth and non-violence.

There is more than one way to perceive Gandhi. He communicates to different persons in different ways; he can transform ordinary ritual like fasts and an ordinary thing like salt into extraordinarily powerful symbols. In fact the very nature of politics changes under his leadership. As pointed out by Terchek,

He offers his alternatives not as passive refugees from the modern world but as active challenges to its most self-confident themes. Wanting to enlarge the discourse to include neglected, often

incommensurate positions, Gandhi hopes not to settle the conversation but to open it up, not to offer solutions but to point to the paradox and irony embedded in any answer.

(Terchek 2000: 4)

Gandhi opens up many directions and perspectives. It is fascinating how close associates of Gandhi perceive him. All the persons talking to Blum about Gandhi knew Gandhi in different contexts and circumstances. Their narrations, therefore, are bound to be different. It is amazing, however, to find that there are no contradictions in their perceptions. Their responses and descriptions seem to be like pieces of a beautiful mosaic, which presents a picture of harmony. What emerges is a humane personality with a rainbow of human virtues and leadership qualities, impressive because of their spontaneity, clarity and intensity. Many of his well-known qualities surface in these interviews, such as commitment to truth and non-violence, relentlessness in transforming ideals into practice, ability to grow, concern for the suffering humanity, ways of changing politics, way of mobilizing the people into the movement and making them fearless, new method of self-suffering, faith in the capacity of the human spirit for regeneration, equal treatment to all, humility, concern for all, preparedness to listen to all and to learn from them, time management and insistence for transparency in public accounts.

There are many memoirs like those of Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade) (1960), Prasad (1957) and Ray (1982) that record the amazing qualities of Gandhi the man and his influence on others. Fred J. Blum has adopted a little different but exciting mode to understand Gandhi. Driven

by an intense desire to understand Gandhi, he had taken interviews of some important persons who were closely associated with Gandhi and had their own distinct personalities. Unfortunately, none of them, including Blum himself, is alive now. The Blum papers, however, present an enormously powerful tool to understand Gandhi's ideas and their interpretations through the prism of dialogues. This book contains interviews with six of the 24 persons who were very close to Gandhi and who were interviewed by Blum. They are J.B. Kripalani, Raihana Tyabji, Dada Dharmadhikari, Sushila Nayar, Jhaver Patel and Sucheta Kripalani. (Others interviewed by Blum were Kaka Kalelkar, Pyarelal, Shankarlal Banker, Babalbhai Mehta, Jugatrambhai, Achutrao Patwardhan, Annasaheb Sahastrabuddhe, Marjorie Sykes, Jayaprakash Narayan, G. Ramachandran, Chimanlal Shah, Balwant Singh, Siddharaj Dhadhha, Balkoba Bhawe, Brijkishan Chandiwalla, Krishna Chandra, Sugata Dasgupta and R.R. Diwakar.) Each had a deep faith in Gandhi's values and yet did not hesitate to voice her/his differences with him. Each of them made a voluntary decision to abide by the master's precepts and yet retained her/his own distinct personality. The Mahatma's magic encompassed their lives, and yet they present their own interpretation of the leader. If Gandhi's ideas are a store-house of stimulation and inspirations, his colleagues and followers do not disappoint us. The interviews are candid and serious. They unfold before us the richness and forthrightness of the experience of knowing Gandhi and living by his principles. It is this dimension of the Gandhi experience which makes them relevant universally. They point out in an effective manner that a special way to understand a person like Gandhi is to

have some glimpses of the Gandhi experience, experience of the mind and the heart. We catch in this book what Gandhi and his work meant to some of his closest associates and followers; they share their innermost thoughts on the Mahatma, his times and times after him till the 1970s.

Blum's questions are searching and the answers he receives are unambiguous. He starts his interview with questions on the interviewee's background and experiences with the Gandhian movements; and then concentrates on the interviewees' perspectives of Gandhi's ideas and work. The interviews provide glimpses of Gandhi's ideas and working with his colleagues from a wide range of regions, backgrounds and professions. They are intimate, simple and direct, somewhat like Gandhi himself. They cover an amazing range of subjects, from seemingly insignificant to important. The main areas of Blum's probing are Gandhi's qualities; character; concepts and working of truth, non-violence and *satyagraha* as well as fasting and diet; concepts of *dharma* and *karma* and soul and ego; spirituality; approach to Christianity; ways to strengthen the people; ability to penetrate into Indian consciousness; ideas of society and views on constructive programme as well as *swadeshi*. Gandhi's concept of *brahmacharya*, related experiments and his views on women find special places in Blum's questions. His efforts to know about India after Gandhi and to locate his relevance reflect strangely our uneasiness with the contemporary times. There is special importance to each interview, as each life is a saga of rare courage and service to people. Consequently the responses bring out the diversity and richness of lives inspired by Gandhi.

This book of Blum papers brings six of these interviews of the persons named above together with a brief life-sketch

of each interviewee. They are selected because each interview unfolds trends of the bygone days, highlights the depth of Gandhian thought, and brings to surface the special relation between Gandhi and his colleague/follower. Raihana Tyabji, a close associate of Gandhi, sought her path in spiritualism. Sushila Nayar and Sucheta Kripalani joined active politics, but never lost their bond with the people. Sushila Nayar and Raihana Tyabji remained unmarried, while Sucheta Kripalani followed celibacy in marriage. The experiences of these three women also give us an idea of the strong bond between Gandhi and women. Dada Dharmadhikari and J.B. Kripalani, though close to Gandhi, remained independent in their thinking and provide us with original insights into Gandhi's ideas and work. Jhaver Patel brings the flavour of the soil of the land. He is a product of the Gandhian system of education and has worked from the grassroots level to the Planning Commission. These interviews show how men and women from different cultures, ideologies and geographical boundaries and upbringing had come to Gandhi, and how each of them interpreted Gandhi in a special way and charted out life accordingly.

All these interviews reveal that the Gandhi experience flows in an undiluted manner through the words of the person who knew Gandhi from close quarters. Testimonies of the persons rooted in Gandhian values effortlessly bring to surface Gandhi's eclectic vision of change, where moral mixes with the social, economic and political aspects of life and where the private life merges with the public sphere. They make us aware that in this world of growing violence

and inequity, Gandhi's words and deeds hold promise of a peaceful and just world. They clearly point out that Gandhi lived for truth and the essence of his life of experiments with truth has retained a perennial value.

Gandhi as viewed by his contemporaries



It is interesting to see how these close associates perceive Gandhi. He obviously does not fit into a particular mould. He belonged to all, he was one with them, and yet as J.B. Kripalani says, in many respects 'a man out of the way' and 'a man who could stand alone'. Dada Dharmadhikari succinctly calls him the most uncommitted human being; his only commitment was with truth. Raihana Tyabji considers him as one of the greatest *yogis* who ever lived. Sucheta Kripalani sensitively points out that he knew India, the real India, India of the poor, India of the villages, better than most people. He was able to get at the real problems of the country and could give real solutions too. Sushila Nayar fondly remembers that 'He would hear you, would not shut you up and then would try to broaden your horizon'. If every pain of the people was felt by Gandhi, his assassination was a trauma the nation never recovered from. As Sucheta Kripalani, who was in Delhi then, describes, everybody was mourning at the time of his assassination; because everyone felt that Gandhi is 'my own special person'. In their diversity and disharmony, they were united by this one great soul.

Gandhi does not get into any theoretical discourse or philosophical debate. Once when asked for a message, he

wrote in Bengali, 'my life is my message' (Tendulkar 1954: 133). In fact, he never wanted any 'ism' associated with his ideas. He had said in a speech on 22 February 1940:

An 'ism' deserves to be destroyed. It is a useless thing. The real thing is non-violence. It is immortal. It is enough for me if it remains alive. I am eager to see Gandhism wiped out at an earlier date. You should not give yourselves over to sectarianism. I did not belong to any sect. I have never dreamt of establishing any sect. If any sect is established in my name after my death, my soul would cry out in anguish.

(Gandhi 1978: 258)

Life for Gandhi cannot be fragmented and the inner voice has to be heard. Dada Dharmadhikari points out that he had 'no business other than life, an integrated life'. He never ran away from any situation, he faced it. Sucheta Kripalani realizes that Gandhi's concept of life was all comprehensive; for him nothing was separate, everything was harmonized. Sushila Nayar and Jhaver Patel in the same vein opine that for Gandhi life is one, there cannot be compartments of the private and the public.

In all his efforts, Gandhi remains essentially a human being, the identity which comes to him effortlessly. Gandhi changes from a Westernized barrister to an apostle of non-violence, from a 'tyrant' husband to a loving companion to Kasturba. He is the caring Bapu to the people; he strives to be a mother to Manu Gandhi and many. He did not occupy any position of power and yet was the unopposed leader of the freedom struggle. He is called traditionalist and also post-modernist. Parekh perceptively comments:

Gandhi saw no hostility or contrast between reason and tradition. Reason was not a transcendental or natural faculty, but a socially acquired capacity presupposing and constantly shaped and nurtured by tradition. Tradition was not a mechanical accumulation of precedents but a product of countless conscious and semi-conscious experiments by rational men over several generations.

(Parekh 1999: 29)

Gandhi faces life as it comes and keeps on evolving, growing and expanding. In his own words, if there is any contradiction between his writings, his later writing is to be treated as final. In his own words:

In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

(Harijan 1933)

The fact is that the essence of his ideas did not change; with the passing of time and the experiences gained, his faith in truth and non-violence got stronger.

Gandhi can wear many labels—from a saint to a political strategist, from a democrat to a dictator. What is most important is that he remains a seeker of truth and a sensitive wonderful human being, a man rooted in the soil of India and who was the citizen of the world. He always laid the greatest importance on the fullest development of the

individual and embraced voluntary poverty. Pointing out the difference between the communist and Gandhian perspectives on trusteeship, Jhaver Patel comments that the communists regard the state as the trustee of the people, whereas Gandhi regards every person as a trustee of the society's welfare. For Gandhi man is a means of development and also an end of development.

Insights into the perception of Gandhi from persons with independent minds and who had close association with Gandhi are very relevant today. Social involvement for Gandhi is of crucial importance. As Dada Dharmadhikari says Gandhi was involved in a quest for harmonious diversity. (This is when Blum mentions that Gandhi was involved in a quest for harmony.) This means the diversity that is conducive to bringing people together and nearer by recognizing that each person is different; difference is not always contradiction. In addition, J.B. Kripalani brings in an important aspect that Gandhi's spirituality was social; it meant morality which becomes a social virtue. In Kripalani's words, 'he cleaned this country from its soul to its lavatories'. Gandhi had internalized prayers as an integral part of life, and his prayer meetings were something more than a ritual; they had a chastening effect on the people. In the words of Dada Dharmadhikari, there was an atmosphere of mutuality in Gandhi's prayers; praying together is praying with one another and not against one another.

The interviewees talk about various forces and influences that moulded Gandhi. Important among them were his parents, especially his mother, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Tolstoy, Thoreau, *Gita* and *Bible* and his experiences in England and South Africa.

All the interviewees talk about Gandhi's ideas of spiritualized politics and his vision of a just and equitable society, which can be brought about through non-violence and truth. According to Gandhi, 'political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life' (Young India 1931a). He combines ethics with politics and changes the very form and content of politics. Instead of having political discussions in a formal atmosphere, he ushers in an era of deliberations in Hindi, sitting on the carpet, wearing coarse clothes, doing physical labour and removing untouchability. Jhaver Patel and Sushila Nayar applaud Gandhi's greatest contribution in making politics moral-spiritual and inclusive of all sections of the society. The greatest contribution made by Gandhi to democracy, as observed by J.B. Kripalani and others, is the emphasis on truth and non-violence. As Dada Dharmadhikari states, Gandhi's main contribution to political field is honesty that precludes all diplomacy.

Gandhi's human touch made the atmosphere around him lively and vibrant. His associates remember his charm very fondly. Raihana Tyabji tenderly remembers how he would touch flowers and cows, and would visit every sick person in Sevagram. Gandhi is often perceived as a very serious man untouched by the pleasures and pains of ordinary life. Interviewees bring out effortlessly the sensitive Gandhi, the human Gandhi, the man who laughs with innocent children and cries with suffering human beings. It is important to note that J.B. Kripalani does not view Gandhi as an ascetic, as living a plain life is not asceticism. Gandhi was not a mortifying individual. Further, Gandhi's thought was dialectic. Gandhi synthesized things that

are considered opposite; he had no airtight divisions. For him political life cannot be separate from moral life; economic life cannot be separate from political and moral life. Gandhi's greatest contribution is that life is one, singular; it cannot be divided into watertight compartments.

Meeting Gandhi for the first time was a special experience and all those who met him could not but remember that special moment. When Jhaver Patel, as a young man, saw Gandhi for the first time in 1929, he was 'dazzled'. He thought that 'Gandhi was too great a man to go near him'. An experience with Gandhi later made him realize that Mahatma was in fact 'open', who had prejudice neither for nor against anybody and who wanted to know the truth. Interaction with Gandhi helped Patel to solve some theoretical questions. Gandhi showed him how to make synthesis of indigenous technology with advanced science and technology, and how to synthesize centralized processes with decentralized ones. Gandhi stood for synthesis because he wanted non-violence in the community. Sushila Nayar, who had seen him since her childhood, remembers his 'child-like smile' and the lasting impression that he was 'a very nice man'. For her Bapu was practical, truthful and loving; a very understanding father figure. Raihana Tyabji has delightful memories of her first encounter with the Mahatma. As a teenager she saw Gandhi and Tagore together, at the party hosted by her family members. She thought that Tagore was the most magnificent figure and Gandhi an ugly little man; yet the little man seemed to be greater of the two. Gandhi was completely himself. She responded to his simplicity and self-forgetfulness. She felt intimate with him from the very first meeting and remained so till the end.

Gandhi's message of fearlessness is conveyed by his deeds.
As Jawaharlal Nehru writes:

...the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear—pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the moneylender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised: Be not afraid.

(Nehru 1946: 303)

From her experience in Noakhali, Sushila Nayar talks about the fact that Gandhi himself faced hostile crowds and taught people not to be afraid. Sucheta Kripalani's experience is on the same lines. When, in the disturbed areas during Partition, she tried to put all the Hindu families in one place, Gandhi told her that she was wrong, because she was turning them into cowards. Gandhi taught her that it is not enough to save the people. The worker must stay there and create an atmosphere of harmony and peace. She realized that he was a strict, meticulous and great teacher, who combined immense compassion and great discipline. She warmly talks about how he assessed people and guided them; he gave the work according to what they were capable of; he built people. 'Each of us got something out of him.' He saw to it that everybody worked to the best of her/his ability from writing to cleaning the latrine. Jhaver Patel remembers his openness, his wanting to know something more and new and his commitment to truth. In fact, he finds Gandhi much ahead of his times.

Being involved in spirituality herself, Raihana Tyabji expresses her experience differently. According to her, Bapu released people's consciousness and kept national consciousness on a pitch for many years. People worked tirelessly, forgetting themselves and becoming totally involved. His tenderness and sense of rightness were remarkable. In the midst of crises and illness, he remembers her old servants. Her sentiments are beautifully captured in the words, 'Bapu gave you the courage to face the truth'.

As we read Blum's interviews, Gandhi comes out alive as a sensitive human being, having deep concern for others. He would not impose any of his ideas or actions over others without the consent of the latter; he would make all attempts to understand others' points of view. He would always follow the path of truth and would give the people the courage to face truth. He added a social dimension to morality that was unique. He aimed at the development of the individual as well as the society. For him life has no compartments, he sees and takes life in its totality. He was consistent, yet growing; demanding, yet giving; firm, yet willing to accept disagreements and differences.

All the interviewees emphasize that Gandhi had spontaneous rapport with people from all strata of the society. His concern for the development of human beings extended beyond the geographical boundaries of India; his identification with the suffering humanity was complete. He remains in true sense 'a citizen of the world'. It is obvious that he was able to exercise enormous personal influence on people around him mainly due to his political stature, his leadership in the Independence movement, his will-power, his

sacrifice and his personal qualities. His personal warmth and loyalty to his colleagues built powerful bonds and provided an alternative family, just as warm as the biological family. He naturally became 'Bapu', the head of this family.

The individual is central in Gandhi's ideas. His eclectic vision of a good society composed of good individuals visualizes vital changes in the existing system and innovation of new tools and strategies. The fundamental purpose of various schemes of human and social development that Gandhi proposes is human capability expansion as well as the achievement of human contestability in all walks of life. (Ghosh 2007)

Gandhi diffuses the autocratic power of the state, makes space for individual freedom and visualizes a new economic system of development, free from both dependence and dominance. While his idealism took him to surging heights in philosophy, his pragmatism and experience kept him rooted in the ground. His commitment to non-violence and truth, his concepts of oceanic circles, decentralization and trusteeship and his view of convergence between end and the means merge effortlessly with his constructive programme, village betterment, propagation of *khadi* and the gospel of bread labour. The tone and tenor of his ideas and work is basically ethical, emphasizing the performance of duties. His emphasis on civic values essential for a citizen and democratic values vital for the system is his lasting contribution. He evolves a beautiful synthesis between politics, economics and ethics, and introduces new devices of interactions between institutions, individuals and the society at large.

*Agreements and differences of the
interviewees with Gandhi*



The interviews with Gandhi's colleagues and disciples, covered in this book, reveal to us their close association with the Mahatma, their capacity and their independent thinking. Each of them learnt something from Mahatma, and each of them did so not uncritically. They retained their own views and expressed them, something which the Mahatma liked. They point out the dynamic and open nature of Gandhian philosophy. This section contains glimpses of collaborations and differences of six close associates of Gandhi with him.

Dada Dharmadhikari, who participated in all *satyagrahas*, remained an independent thinker and worker throughout his life. Though a member of the Provincial Assembly and the Constituent Assembly, by his own admission, he felt more at ease in prison than in the parliamentary institutions of Delhi. Political parties, in his opinion, are based on freedom of thought, which they deny to their members. Naturally he regards political parties as a conspiracy against the people. His points of differences with Gandhi reflect his original thinking. He does not agree with Gandhi on boycott of the British education; in fact he sees this education as a blessing in disguise. Though unconvinced about the boycott of the British education, he decided to follow Gandhi because the latter was to launch a great experiment. He found Gandhi extremely humane and open-minded without inhibitions except 'some old-fashioned ideas' such as Gandhi called himself a Hindu, and had weakness for the Muslims who are incorrigible bigots. He could fight

against the Hindu bigotry, but could not do the same against the Muslim bigotry. Then, there is the issue of Gandhi's orthodoxy. He seemed to believe in organized religion, which Dharmadhikari regarded as a monstrosity. According to him, Gandhi stuck to *varnashramdharma*. *Varna*, for Dharmadhikari, however, is a psychological and sociological myth; it can never be a reality.

It is extremely interesting to come across Dada Dharmadhikari's disagreement with Gandhi's view that women are more non-violent than men. He maintains that in fact, women are more violent, because they are cowards. Cowardice is the most violent thing in the world, and violence is the most cowardly thing in the world. This is so because women have been labouring under the wrong impression that body strength counts and manual strength is superior. Further, Dharmadhikari does not agree with Gandhi that country-dweller is more moral than city-dweller. The country-dweller appears so because he has less opportunities of becoming immoral. In addition, Dharmadhikari did not agree with Gandhi's fad of diet and fasts; and believed that Gandhi was not successful in translating his beliefs into actual life in the *ashram*.

Raihana Tyabji, a daughter of an aristocratic Muslim family, had her own arguments for her devotion and criticism of the Mahatma. She could not participate very actively in the *satyagraha* due to ill-health. She, however, remained a devout follower of Bapu ever since she set her eyes on him as a teenager. Bapu taught her and others a sense of rightness, the essential rightness. She observed that in later years people became less and less influenced by Bapu, because they began to have more and more desires

of their own. People listened not to the saint, but to the voice of power. She is unhappy with the change in the atmosphere after Bapu, as this atmosphere is created by power-, money- and chair-worshippers. However, there were some who were different. They turned away from power and continued working in villages. They have kept the Gandhian picture of power alive in our hearts.

Tyabji expresses differences with her master, and that reveals her free spirit. She did not accept the principle of *brahmacharya* as preached and practiced by Gandhi, though she herself had remained unmarried by choice. To her, married life is a very sacred thing. While abstinence in the army is a necessity, it cannot be made a rule for everybody. She initially believed in *brahmacharya* absolutely, but gradually changed her ideas as she saw the way it affected people. As years passed, she believed less and less in the rigidity of non-violence as practiced by the followers of *ahimsa*. Non-violence on the physical plane leads to extreme violence on other planes. For instance, the man practising abstinence becomes a sadist and he becomes violent on emotional plane. She learnt over the years that there could be such a thing as violence. She saw in Wardha that non-violence did not work for the Hindus or the Muslims. Again, Bapu could calm Calcutta, because people were prepared; but people in Bihar or Noakhali did not listen to him. The greatest shock to her was how non-violence did not work with Godse, who was obsessed with the idea.

Raihana Tyabji's deep involvement with spiritual thoughts and religious practices stimulates her to think over Gandhi's views on Hinduism. She comments that Bapu tried to get rid of certain things in the *Hindu dharma*, saying that they

were useless; in fact that did a lot of harm to Hinduism. According to her *kumkum* has great mystic power; but Bapu did away with that. Another example is Bapu's complete rejection of colour. The people of this country need colour, but Bapu asked women to wear white saris; he said no to colours, because coloured saris drew attention and would cost more. She, however, realized that colourlessness is de-vitalizing; psychologically it did a lot of harm. It destroyed something in the Indian woman. Some joy was destroyed, though the people of India are of colour, music, dance and joy. However, in the *satyagraha* women had to work with men, and making themselves look attractive would have been a dangerous thing. So there were no adornments. Bapu's rejection of bangles also did tremendous amount of psychological harm. Glass bangles have mystic power; a woman wearing them feels certain sense of responsibility. She remembers how Kasturba wanted to wear them in the *ashram*. But Bapu could not allow her the privileges that were denied to other women.

Sucheta Kripalani, a professor, was active during the Quit India struggle. Simultaneously her involvement with the constructive work and rehabilitation of the refugees was also exemplary. She perceptively realizes that Gandhi thought not merely in terms of transfer of power, but in terms of changing the entire body of the society and that could be achieved only if thousands went to the villages and worked there. But that did not happen. Blum asks her why today's India is not Gandhian. Her only answer is that we did not understand Gandhi. Intellectual understanding is different from understanding, realizing, and assimilating him. Many may have intellectually understood Gandhi,

but they have not adopted his ideas in their lives. Later even Nehru did not project anything that Gandhi had done. Tyabji also disapproves policies adopted by Nehru.

Sucheta Kripalani further elaborates that political work is like drinking heady wine, emotion or upsurge. There is publicity and fame in going to the jail. However, village life is hard and there is no fame and publicity in doing constructive work there. The people who participated in *satyagraha* campaigns were diverted after independence because of their involvement in politics and many have become greedy. The constructive workers too kept themselves aloof and became too enamoured of their own institutions and their work.

Sucheta Kripalani's own commitment to Gandhian ideology remained firm throughout her life. It is important, however, to note that while she asserts that 'Gandhi symbolizes India, he understood India', her rational mind does not accept all of the Mahatma's thoughts and decisions. She does not agree with Gandhi's reaction to the Bihar earthquake that it was due to human failing and God's wrath. The important decision of her own marriage was influenced by Gandhi. When Gandhi expressed his disapproval of her marriage with J.B. Kripalani on the ground that he would lose an important worker, she argued that he would get two workers after this marriage. When advised by Gandhi to marry someone else to avert her unhappiness and to lighten Kripalani's burden she reacted that it would be 'immoral and dishonest'. The two got married; and Sucheta Kripalani proved that Gandhi got two workers instead of one, and Gandhi changed his views accordingly. The intensity of deliberations and the decision taken

left no scar on her. Instead she felt that he was human and modern, his sympathy and love made it possible for her to discuss such intimate matters with him.

Sushila Nayar chose her own way to translate Gandhi's ideas. She does not talk about her differences with Gandhi, and yet her own life course indicates that she took her own decisions and chose to translate his ideas into practice in her own way. She had studied medicine before taking a plunge into working with Gandhi. After his assassination, she chose to go abroad to study, because as she admitted, she felt that she had collected enough rust on her medical knowledge. She worked with Gandhi, but felt that it was not the same thing as practising scientific medicine in a hospital with all modern gadgets. After returning from the US, she worked for the refugees. And after a successful career in politics, she started a medical college in Sevagram in 1969. She thought it was the best way to offer a living memorial to Gandhi by starting a place to train workers to understand the spirit and try to implement them, her field being health. She says that people talk of Gandhi but they do not live up to his teachings. And yet, some of Gandhi's teachings have become a part of India's being; the 1977 elections after the emergency have shown that.

Jhaver Patel, trained in the Gandhian ethos at the *ashram* and Gujarat Vidyapith, had participated in the *satyagraha* four times after the salt *satyagraha*. He had also the experience of working with All India Village Industries Association and the Planning Commission. He says painfully and plainly, 'We seem to have failed after Gandhi'. This is because people, or rather the leaders, did not implicitly follow him. They extolled him as the Mahatma, but his teachings

did not percolate through the leaders to the masses. People now look to government for everything. That is a big failure. When Blum asks what Gandhi would think about the present political situation in India, Jhaver Patel says that he would not be happy; he would probe into the reasons for this situation. Gandhi had rightly advised the dissolution of the Congress and turning it into *Lok Sevak*. After independence, he would have reoriented the whole programme to farmers' problems and programmes. Jhaver Patel is candid in his reply to Blum's question about Gandhian movement after Gandhi. He says that the spirit persists, but it does not grow. It has become a routine movement. *Khadi* is in a routine manner; there is no progressive rational attitude.

This follower of Mahatma is not a blind devotee. He points out that though Gandhi encouraged people to be silent workers, he did not encourage intellectual pursuits. His whole constructive army was devoted but not brainy. And politicians, who were clever, did not bother about this. Jhaver Patel has other points of disagreement with Gandhi. He does not approve of Gandhi's experiments with women. He also feels that Gandhi confused in deliberations over the essence of Hinduism; he should not have said that 'Truth is God'. That was not Hinduism. He also comments that Gandhi took up the cause of *khadi* that did not touch many villages. If he had taken up agriculture, he would have revolutionized the minds of farmers and farm labourers.

Blum's discussion with J.B. Kripalani displays the independent and alert mind of the Indian leader. Kripalani had resigned his position as president of the Congress before independence, because the negotiations with the British government were carried out without informing

him. Thereafter he formed a new political party known as the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, and later played an important role in India with Jayaprakash Narayan after the emergency was declared. He agrees with Blum that almost all that was achieved in the villages in Gandhi's time in the social and economic fields was lost in less than a decade after his death. A few cells, where constructive work is done, however, follow Gandhi's ideas. Talking about the Gandhian movement after Gandhi's death, he points out that Nehru disagreed with Gandhi at every step. We wanted to copy the West and become an industrialized nation. In fact the Gandhians have lost the opportunity of presenting a real alternative to the present society. They did not resist the unjust measures the government was adopting. They did not go to the Parliament; they did not organize themselves into a political party. They felt that politics is dirty, but Gandhi never said politics was a dirty game.

A study of the six interviews makes us aware of the fact that Gandhi's ideas are not static and closed; they have space for differences. They equip the seekers with the capacity to think and act independently following their own conscience and inner voice and open up possibilities of new directions of thought and action.

Insights from the interviews



Insights from the nine interviews are enriching. As these persons close to Gandhi unfold their views, we get glimpses of the time they lived in. We get the feel of persons who were integral parts of the freedom movement under Gandhi

and who continued working on Gandhian principles in independent India. We also get inklings of changing politics from Gandhian ethos to base pragmatism, and from idealistic heights to realistic ground. Most importantly, these interviews inspire us to explore how Gandhi's ideas can be creatively interpreted and tried in contemporary times.

We learn a lot from these interviews. First, we learn once again the dynamic nature of Gandhi's life and ideas and their impact on people from all sections and strata of the society. It is fascinating to see how the interviewees carved their own paths of life and action. Their experiences reassert the importance of constructive work with the poor and marginalized sections of society to build up their capacity for collective action. Each one, from a layman to a professional or an expert, can offer their skill for the welfare of the poor. Sucheta Kripalani and Sushila Nayar joined active politics and worked for the welfare of the people. Jhaver Patel worked from the grassroots level up to the Planning Commission. Dada Dharmadhikari and J.B. Kripalani never lost touch with the people despite their intellectual heights. Raihana Tyabji, however, became more introvert and spiritually inclined after Gandhi's death.

Second, we reconfirm our faith in the relation between politics and ethics as well as in non-violent protests against corruption and injustice. Recently the struggle for right to information in our country has been successful in getting the Right to Information Act, 2005 passed. Persons like Aruna Roy and Anna Hazare today evoke Gandhi in their work. The experiences of the six persons covered in this book show that they struggled against the social

and political evils, drawing strength and inspiration from Gandhi. People today are frustrated with politics and an administration infested with selfishness and greed. They look for an alternative. The film '*Lage Raho Munnabhai*' became successful because it offers ways and means to oppose irregularities. *Gandhigiri* may appear to be not a flattering term and can be seen even as counterpart of *dadagiri*. The term, however, suggests attempts to uplift the opponent by awakening his conscience and appealing to his noble feelings¹.

Third, we also learn that non-violence, in spite of its limitations, is of vital importance in our violent world. People of different countries have been inspired by Gandhi's ideas on non-violence in their protests against injustice and oppression. The interviewees bring out finer nuances of the concept of non-violence. Today we realize that non-violent resistance by itself may not be enough to cope with the atrocities against the powerless and the deprived sections of the society; the active support of the democratic state to fight injustice and oppression is necessary. In this context it is important to give attention to Gandhi's words and deeds. He advocated non-violence and not cowardice or non-action at critical moments; he rejected the view that killing was never justified and all killing was violence. His approval of killing the calf, frightening away the monkeys interfering with crops in the *ashram*, loss of jobs for the

¹All the actions and incidents shown effectively in the film, however, have to be taken with a pinch of salt. For example, the scene showing an old pensioner taking off his clothes to register his protest against payment of bribes may be a little away from the genuine tactics of *satyagraha*.

British workers in Lancashire and serving meat to meat-eater guests like Maulana Azad and Louis Fischer make us aware of the complexities of the issue. In an interview with Louis Fischer discussing the likely peasant movement in independent India, Gandhi did not rule out temporary violence. Thus, while all violence was bad and must be condemned, it was important to distinguish between its different forms and contexts (Parekh 1999: 134–54). For Gandhi, oppression of the weak, attacking the self-respect of the oppressed and willful humiliation of the powerless are forms of violence. As Erik H. Erikson expresses, ‘With all respect for the traditional translation of *ahimsa*, I think Gandhi implied in it, besides a refusal not to do physical harm, a determination not to violate another person’s essence’ (Erikson 1970: 412). We need to be sensitive to non-violence as propagated by Gandhi.

Fourth, Gandhi’s ideas and lives of the interviewees influenced by those, give us the inspiration to think differently and act according to one’s own conscience. Each of them has her/his own experience with Gandhi, and each has her/his own collaborations and differences with him. Each found her/his own path, which is different from others, and followed it with conviction. In the troubled contemporary times their lives and views are beacon lights for persons keen to find their way.

Finally, the interviews motivate us to develop our own interpretation of Gandhi. While Gandhi scholars from the West have enriched our understanding of Gandhi, it is important to examine the writings of the Indian scholars too. Insight from Bhikhu Parekh, a scholar of Indian origin, is particularly enriching. Writings of J.B. Kripalani and

Dada Dharmadhikari on Gandhi's ideas are extremely important for their originality and insight. J.B. Kripalani and Dada Dharmadhikari were very close to Gandhi, and yet maintained their independent and critical views on Gandhi's ideas. Fortunately the core of J.B. Kripalani's writing is available in English. Dada Dharmadhikari, however, has written mostly in Marathi. Some of his writings have since been translated to English. Works of some writers in Gujarati, Gandhi's mother tongue, like Swami Anand, Kaka Kalelkar, Narayan Desai and Kishorilal Mashruwala are helpful. Interpretations of Gandhi in regional languages are a rich treasure for Gandhi scholars, and have not yet received the attention they deserve.

Blum has posed an interesting question: If the Mahatma had lived long, what kind of social order would have developed? The responses of the interviewees are relevant. According to J.B. Kripalani, he would have carried on the constructive programme with the help of the government; and would have worked for communal unity, removal of untouchability and decentralized industries. Jhaver Patel points out that if Gandhi had lived long enough, he would have worked out political, economic, technological and sociological syntheses in rural patterns. He would have given attention to the formation of rural cooperative, as he wanted to solve the primary conflict of rural–urban relation; and also of the relationship of the village republic with the central government. Gandhi would begin with the village republic and trust it with the functions of planning and developing the industry and social relationship. While the present planners regard man as a problem, Gandhi saw man as a resource.

Referring to the dynamic nature of Gandhi, Dada Dharmadhikari comments how in his attitude to the British, Gandhi changed from a loyalist to a non-cooperator. His views on castes also changed. When he decided that castes must go, he campaigned to remove untouchability after 1930s. Then his attitude to economic questions too changed. During his last days, he believed that the landless farmers and small peasants will have to offer some fight—non-violent fight. However, Gandhi's ideas on non-violence became more intense with the passing of time. Gandhi believed, as pointed out by Sushila Nayar, that one will generate the inner strength to the extent one succeeds in disciplining oneself.

In addition to these insights, the interviews enrich our understanding of Gandhi in the areas of *satyagraha*, *brahmacharya*, role of women and vision for an egalitarian society.

Satyagraha



Satyagraha for Gandhi is not just a political weapon; it is a way of life. This peaceful yet revolutionary innovation is an internal value that takes the inner self to a higher plane. Gandhi believes that a non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'. It is a programme of transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power (Harijan 1946a). As pointed out by Bhikhu Parekh, Gandhi's theory of *satyagraha* is at once both epistemological and political, a theory of both knowledge and action, and much misunderstood when seen as either alone (Parekh

1995: 143). For Gandhi, whatever comes across life has to go through the prism of experience. This experience goes beyond the experience of the senses. It is the experience of the inner self, the experience of the soul leading to Truth. That was reason enough for him to express that '*satyagraha* is not a subject of research; you must experience it, use it, live by it' (Gandhi in Sodepur *ashram* on 19 January 1946, quoted by Bondurant 1959: 146). It is an eternal principle of life, based on love, which seeks to establish an agreement with the opponent on the basis of reason and persuasion. It is essentially constructive and creative. As Juergensmeyer points out:

In the Gandhian sense, a fight exists wherever there is a state of irresolution and disharmony: untruth. According to the Gandhian ideal, the fighter should not rest until the opposite is achieved—truth—and that means never, for there are always wrongs to be righted, always fragments to be made whole. The endless fighting of the Gandhian is not a quixotic venture, however, for the very act of struggle can be its own reward.

(Juergensmeyer 2003: 62)

Bondurant observes that the force within any dialectical situation is derived from the clash of opposing elements within that situation. In every case of *satyagraha* the conflict is to be understood in dialectical terms (Bondurant 1959: 195). *Satyagraha* is a dynamic process, rooted in non-violence, which liberates the oppressed as well as the oppressor by dissolving the conflict. This technique paves the way for dialogues between and across the boundaries of religion, class, caste and gender. Gandhi was clear about his goals—both short- and long-term. The short-term goal was

the achievement of *swaraj* (independence) from the British rule. The ultimate goal, however, was *sarvodaya* (the development of all in all facets of life). The development of the individual and the society are intertwined. Gandhi is consistent in his premise that the goal of truth and non-violence is the way to reach there. The end and the means have to be consistent; in fact, they are two sides of the same coin. *Satyagraha* is both a means and an end in itself.

The essence of *Satyagraha* for the six interviewees covered in this book is truth. *Satyagraha* is a way of fighting evil and the wrong. It is, in the words of Raihana Tyabji, 'a non-violent fight for human freedom'. In this context it is important to remember, as J.B. Kripalani points out, that making non-violence and truth as instruments in social life was Gandhi's own invention; it is not found in Christianity or anywhere.

These interviews reveal that in India many persons of the Gandhian era had started getting disillusioned and disappointed after the death of Gandhi. Raihana Tyabji brings out the finer distinction between the persons who followed it as a way of life and those who accepted it as a strategy. According to her the real *satyagrahis* are those who abstained from power, those who kept on working like Ravishankar Maharaj, Vinobaji and others. There were, however, some like Sardar Patel or Kripalani, who were like soldiers; they followed it as a technique and were frank to tell this to Bapu. They fought against the British, not so much against the wrong. Sucheta Kripalani too believes that for the Gandhians who understood *satyagraha*, it was not merely a strategy and a method of fighting.

Blum's exploration of *satyagraha* also reveals the subtle meaning of non-violence for Gandhi. Answering Blum's question about Erickson's mention of presence of violence in Gandhi, Jhaver Patel says that there is no violence in Gandhi, but Gandhi was so dogged at a point which he thought was true and that rather became vehement for others. Gandhi was too impatient, he goaded too much, beyond the capacity of many persons. To that extent, he was violent, but 'not intentionally'. The candid observations of Raihana Tyabji are important in this context. As years passed, she believed less and less in the rigidity of non-violence as practised by those who follow it. She began to see that there is a middle path and there can be such a thing as violence. She differentiates between non-violence and cowardice; and remembers that Gandhi himself had said that violence is better than cowardice.

Gandhi's fasts, in this context, attract our attention. They have been viewed as a moral as well as a political weapon. The interviewees, by and large, maintain that Gandhi's fasts were for self-purification and for moving the hearts of others towards self-purification through self-suffering, and were not coercive.

Jhaver Patel feels that the fasts were meant neither to be coercive nor for self-purification, but to put moral pressure on people. Gandhi expressed his agony through that weapon, so that people became calm. J.B. Kripalani remembers that Gandhi's fasts used to focus the attention of the whole nation. The people, so far not concerned with questions, would begin to take stock of the situation, and would ask themselves why they should not help in the reform

movement, for example, against untouchability. The opponents were also touched. One, however, cannot avoid some kind of coerciveness in such fasts. What is important is the intention of the person who fasts; and here the intention was against injustice and tyranny. Sucheta Kripalani also remembers that the impact of his fasts was tremendous. Though his fasts were coercive in a way, there was real sanction behind his fasting. Dada Dharmadhikari has a different note to strike. He does not agree with Gandhi's concept of fasts. He feels that such fasts are a sort of coercion and do not change your heart at all. It is reason and understanding, and not fasts, that help to purify. Fasts did succeed in bringing immediate results in non-violent campaigns, but ultimately there was a feeling of bitterness. Conversion of the people was the purpose, but that did not happen.

Blum has another important question for his interviewees, whether Gandhi's non-violence makes too great demands on people. J.B. Kripalani says that Gandhi's non-violence was non-violent resistance. As such it makes no greater demands on the people than any revolutionary war in which people have to sacrifice their lives, if they are to achieve anything. According to Dada Dharmadhikari, Gandhi's non-violence did not make too great demands on people; it was people's thinking that came in the way. We are conditioned to think that killing is the expression of heroism; in fact risking one's life is heroism, not killing.

Gandhi's *satyagraha* is an ingenious combination of reason, morality and politics; it relied on the powers of argument, suffering, love and organized pressure, and appealed to the opponent's head, heart and interests (Parekh 1995: 156). Gandhi's technique of influencing the opponents by

voluntary sufferings has evoked some criticisms even from sympathetic scholars. Nirmal Kumar Bose sees *satyagraha* as ‘a way of conducting “war” by means of non-violence’ (Bose 1972: 109). Reinhold Niebuhr sees in Gandhi both a religious and ethical leader as well as someone who knows how to use force without violence and hatred (Niebuhr 1931: 1274–76). In this way, Gandhian campaigns rely on power to unsettle and disturb, but Gandhi expects that lasting changes will come from voluntary suffering and conversion (Terchek 2000: 185).

Gandhi believed that voluntary suffering would have been powerful enough even to change the ways of Hitler. It is important, in this context, to note the view of Martin Buber, Israeli theologian and philosopher, on the subject. Buber, like Gandhi, wants persons to move beyond narrow constructions of themselves and others. He tried unsuccessfully to convince Gandhi that Hitler was evil and beyond all moral appeal (Dalton 1998: 134–38; Terchek 2000: 186–87; Parekh 1995: 202). Blum also poses the important question whether Gandhi’s way would have worked with Hitler. This evokes varied responses. Sucheta Kripalani does not think so. One cannot work with only one Gandhi. Raihana Tyabji tends to agree with the view that the *satyagraha* worked only against the British in India and firmly believes that *satyagraha* can be tried only if we have a saint of Bapu’s eminence leading it.

For Jhaver Patel, as the success of *satyagraha* depends on the implementation of solid truth, it would fail to the extent to which there were weaknesses and lapses in it. J.B. Kripalani prefers to go back to Gandhi for an answer. He says that Gandhi has already answered this question

by maintaining that our non-violence should match the violence of Hitler. But Kripalani cannot say that human nature has reached such heights except in some individuals. For Gandhi, what was theoretically possible was also practically possible; here J.B. Kripalani does not agree with Gandhi. Dada Dharmadhikari views the question in the context of the situation. According to him it is hypothetical whether the idea of non-violence that worked against the British would work in other circumstances. It was the only way available to the people then., armed resistance was out of question.

The original insight of Dada Dharmadhikari into the concept of *satyagraha* is revealed in his interview, when Blum quotes Lannoy about the dialectic of *satyagraha* with the premise that it liberates both parties and establishes love for all. Dada says that he does not know whether truth mutually liberates, as he has never found truth. The only truth he knows is life, and life consists in mutuality. This unity of life may be called the ultimate truth, so that which is conducive to unity of life is truth; that is non-violence, and *satyagraha* must assume that there is unity of life. J.B. Kripalani and Sucheta Kripalani tend to agree with the interpretation of Lannoy. Sushila Nayar agrees with Blum that *atman* was very crucial for Gandhi. She says that the whole basis of *satyagraha* is that there is a bit of divinity within every human being. The most evil also has the divine spark and one can bring that divine spark to the full strength through the process of *satyagraha*.

Raihana Tyabji draws attention to an area not usually noticed by the scholars and activists. In her opinion, if one is uncertain about one's right way, one will respond

to truth in the other person's insistence. If, however, one is fully convinced that what one is doing is right, then it is *satyagraha* of one person against another, and such situation does not result in mutual love. It then results in Hindustan and Pakistan. Muslims under Jinnah wanted Pakistan and power, not the spiritual transformation. It did not work with Godse either because he wanted to protect the Hindu *dharma*. Similarly it cannot be tried against the bombs.

Brahmacharya



Gandhi's views on *brahmacharya* and his experiments with women have been severely criticized and highly debated. It is remarkable that the interviewees have spoken candidly on the subject and have helped in gaining a better understanding of Gandhi. We come across finer nuances of man–woman relationship differentiating between lust and sex.

J.B. Kripalani points out that while *brahmacharya* has a high place in the history of Christianity, even a family man can follow it in India. One can have children and then can leave sex. A person following *brahmacharya* has to regulate his life in every way such as seeing, hearing or reading. Sushila Nayar also understands Gandhi's *brahmacharya* beyond physical levels. She, however, is silent on Gandhi's 'experiments in celibacy' in Noakhali. Sucheta Kripalani, however, has no qualms about sharing her experiences. She makes it clear that she and J.B. Kripalani had married, but lived as companions all their lives. Gandhi was not in favour of this marriage, as he thought he would lose J.B. Kripalani. Sucheta, however, stood firm and totally

transparent. She had frank discussions with Gandhi, chose her path and has no complaints about that. She, however, feels that Gandhi overdid his emphasis on *brahmacharya*. Sex is an important part of life, yet not so important that it cripples you. She followed *brahmacharya* because of her decision. In her words:

Mine was an experience more or less at a lower level, not of the highest sublimation level. I did it for practical reasons, for my commitment to Gandhiji and we were so busy that we had no time (for children)... He did not make it a condition, but I took it as a challenge.

Raihana Tyabji does not surprise us when she opines that *brahmacharya* is not new to India. One can love somebody without having lust. What is surprising is her admission that she initially believed in *brahmacharya* absolutely but gradually changed her views as she saw the way it affected people. Though devoted to her spiritual quest, she accepts the realities of life.

Jhaver Patel is more critical. He finds that Gandhi was not balanced so far as *brahmacharya* was concerned; he was 'too much given to it'. Gandhi's experiments were like playing with fire. Apart from forming a bad precedent, they made the girl victim of his experiments, and it was humiliating for her. J.B. Kripalani, however, thinks differently; he says that we all use human beings for our experiments. What is important is whether the human beings that we use have a free will of their own and whether they have given consent to be used.

Dada Dharmadhikari offers a dynamic interpretation of the term *brahmacharya*. In his opinion, it is a social value

and assumes inviolability of body. No woman's/man's body will be used against her/his will. By his own admission, his interpretation may be different from that of Gandhi, but it is not contrary to what he said. There is difference between abstinence and *brahmacharya*. One need not be afraid of a woman's body. There can be no love where there is fear. Both Gandhi and Vinoba advocated abstinence, but their proposition is 'where there is love, there can be no lust'. However, there can be sex without lust. They did not accept this. Gandhi in a sense accepted this in his last experiment with sex in Noakhali; he had shed all fear of the woman's body. Dada Dharmadhikari brings out another dimension—according to Gandhi *brahmacharya* is for women also, though our tradition never accepted it. Gandhi maintained that if one can lead a life of celibacy even after marriage, it would be ideal.

Role of women



Gandhi and women share a very special relation. Gandhi played an important role in bringing women out of their secluded homes and in furthering the cause of nationalism (Dastur and Mehta 1991, Forbes 1996, Kasturi and Mazumdar 1994). The interviewees have been involved with the freedom struggle; they have experienced the tidal wave of the nationalist struggle engulfing people and have witnessed women coming out of their homes breaking the shackles of social customs.

Sushila Nayar and Raihana Tyabji remember how their mothers from traditional families felt empowered

during the freedom struggle. Raihana Tyabji talks about the times under the Mahatma's spell when women experienced new energy and when the Muslim women from conservative families became unselfconscious. She vividly remembers how the Tyabji family burnt their finest and richest clothes, and that similar bonfires happened all over the country. She pays tribute to her mother, who cooperated whole-heartedly with her father in the movement; her sacrifice, like that of most women, was greater than his. She also brings to our notice how, during the freedom struggle, women also took the work of men, like managing various *ashrams* and working in the villages, and they performed wonderfully well. Jhaver Patel believes that Gandhi revived the ideal tradition of the Indian/Aryan culture, which respects women. According to him, Gandhi regarded women more non-violent than men, because women are submissive, loving and can take suffering.

Dada Dharmadhikari views the situation from a different perspective. He believes that Gandhi wanted women to lead a pure and devoted life, and he wanted to expand the meaning of 'devotion'. He wanted to change the fact that our present society is based on the slavery of women. In that sense, he wanted to change the traditional family.

Sushila Nayar maintains that it is because of women's participation in the non-violent movement that women got equal rights after independence without asking for it. Gandhi imparted confidence in women by making practically semi-literate women take up responsibilities for service of the sick and illiterate in villages. He said that in non-violent *satyagraha* a woman can make great contribution because of her capacity to undergo self-suffering.

Though most of the women are still suffering, the fact remains that great awakening and Gandhi brought great consciousness of their strength to women in the course of the non-violent movement.

Sucheta Kripalani talks about Gandhi's advice to women in Noakhali, when Partition was imminent with Independence. She remembers his clear advice to them to sacrifice everything, husband, family, and stay there. He advised young girls to give up jewellery and to be simple and asked married women to give up sex life. She, however, feels that his extreme demand for sacrifice had its repercussions too. She also feels Gandhi had peculiar notions about celibacy and marriage, and candidly admits that his over-emphasis on giving up involvement in family life is beyond her understanding. This, however, in no way diminishes his commitment to the cause of women. Admitting his tremendous contribution in bringing out women, Sucheta emphasizes that disagreeing with Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver, Gandhi held women to be superior to men; he thought women had inner strength. J.B. Kripalani is, however, quick to point out that woman can be crueler than man, when she comes to power.

Blum has an interesting question about Gandhi's combining in him masculine and feminine in a new way. The interviewees' replies confirm the androgenic trends in Gandhi's personality. Dada Dharmadhikari, Jhaver Patel, Sushila Nayar, Sucheta Kripalani, and J.B. Kripalani opine that he was both a father and a mother. (His womanly qualities are deep faith in non-violence, looking after food and health of everybody, being the perfect host, and taking care of the sick and the needy; and his manly qualities

are managing affairs and strict discipline.) Sushila Nayar further comments that Gandhi considered himself half woman to the extent he developed non-violence. The term 'effeminate' is a derogatory term, but Gandhi considered it as the highest attainment to be a half-woman. It is important in this context to note that the Hindu mythology has the concept of '*ardhnarishwar*'.

Vision of future



Gandhi visualizes an egalitarian society based on the principles of non-violence and truth. Such a society relies on collective thinking, collective actions and collective responsibilities. He visualized a glorious future for India. In his words:

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India where all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such India for the curse of untouchability, or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world, neither exploiting, nor being exploited, we should have the smallest army imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether foreign or indigenous.

(Young India 1931b)

He builds strong bridges between theory and practice to reach this goal. By his own admission he is not a theorist.

To a friend's suggestion to write a treatise on the science of *ahimsa*, he had responded:

To write a treatise on the science of *ahimsa* is beyond my powers. I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain. What I understand, according to my rights, to be my duty and what comes my way I do. All my action is actuated by the spirit of service.

(Harijan 1946b)

All his life he remained in his domain of action and opened a new horizon of a theory of non-violence and his own unconventional perspective of politics. As Parekh argues, 'Gandhi arrived at his broad definition of *ahimsa* by means of three crucial steps. He equated it with compassion and the latter with love, and defined love in worldly and activist terms' (Parekh 1999: 127). Gandhi's definition of *ahimsa* as active and energetic love leading to dedicated service of fellow-men represented a radical departure from Indian traditions. Not surprisingly his countrymen felt deeply disturbed (Parekh 1999: 129). Gandhi, however, went ahead with the theory and practice of his radical politics which is above divisions and compartments and which presents an alternate way of thinking and which works towards the goal of an egalitarian society based on human dignity, peace, non-violence and dialogue.

Explanation of Gandhi's ways of thinking and working provided by J.B. Kripalani in this context is of special interest to us. J.B. Kripalani says that persons like Christ, Aurobindo Ghosh and *rishis* were concerned with their soul. They thought that the realization of their self would

itself be a contribution to the civilization of the world. They were concerned with the world, but in an indirect way. But Gandhi was concerned with it in a direct way. For him, *swaraj* was not only political freedom but also economic and social freedom and the elimination of vices from which the nation was suffering. Non-violence of Christ has no social implications; it was for the salvation of the soul. What distinguishes Gandhi is that he made non-violence an instrument for fighting political, social and economic wrongs. The followers of Gandhi do not understand this distinction even now. Gandhi wanted to use non-violence as an instrument for bringing about social justice in the world, between man and man, nation and nation and among nations.

When Blum comments that Gandhi was concerned with not only the freedom of all men, but also the freedom of the whole man, many of the interviewees agree. Dada Dharmadhikari explains this concept effectively. The whole man is an integrated man—integrated in the sense that he is at peace with himself, others and nature. He will live with others as brother, this is the new man; and neighbourliness will be an essential characteristic of this new man. Gandhi never went to any temple or mosque. His *dharma* was to live in the society, a non-exploitative society. Sucheta Kripalani also talks on the same lines. According to her, for Gandhi, *swaraj* meant not just displacement of the British, but that everybody has opportunities to develop in a society, free from exploitation.

Gandhi's ideas on trusteeship are well discussed by the scholars. J.B. Kripalani, however, gives us fresh insight into the role of the capitalists. He explains that one cannot

avoid capitalism. Either the state becomes capitalist or there are individual capitalists. How can there be production unless one has saved something? It is more difficult to act against the state than against a private capitalist. If economic life is given in the hands of the state, the state becomes totalitarian.

Some of Gandhi's ideas have not found favour with the critics. He has been branded as a Hindu politician; he is also criticized for supporting the Muslim cause. The interviewees help to clear such cobwebs and present before us Gandhi's stand on religion. Sucheta Kripalani remembers Gandhi's intense anguish and untiring work at Noakhali after the Partition and his passion for communal harmony. Religion for him surpassed the narrow precincts of sects and dogged ideologies. As clarified by J.B. Kripalani, religion for Gandhi did not mean ceremonies or *samadhi*; religion cannot be lived in a cave or mountain top; it must be lived in society. Gandhi's religion was morality, and the two main principles of that religion were truth and non-violence, the rest follows. *Dharma* for Gandhi was expressed in truth and non-violence. He never went to any temple or mosque; his *dharma* was to be lived in the society. There could be no *dharma* outside the society. *Swadharma* is whatever duties one has chosen for oneself, those should not injure another person. Also, one does not care about the results, because results are not in one's hands.

As Dada Dharmadhikari mentions, Gandhi had an irresistible urge for self-purification, a passion in the best sense of the term. For Gandhi it came spontaneously from within, but it is not true of his followers. Gandhi always

buckled himself to face the situation. He never ran away from the situation. Usually a man wants forgiveness for himself and punishment for others. Gandhi, however, put this upside down. According to Dada, suffering for Gandhi is doing or bearing something that is unpleasant for the sake of general good.

Dada Dharmadhikari comes out with an interesting insight into Gandhi's concept of work too. According to Dada, creativity is a basic urge of human beings and it ought to have no exchange value. One works because one cannot do without activity. When one works for his neighbour, it is love of labour. This was Gandhi's idea. He wanted to change the attitude towards physical work which is looked down upon. The intellectuals, by doing some physical work, can identify themselves with those doing physical work. In addition, physical work is good for physical health also.

The *ashram* had great significance for Gandhi. As Jhaver Patel says, the *ashram* was the place for constructive work as well as political movement. Dada Dharmadhikari says the *ashram* was Gandhi's laboratory, where he tried to translate his beliefs into actual life. Dada, however, thinks that he did not succeed fully. There is evidence to substantiate Dada Dharmadhikari's comment. Even during Gandhi's lifetime the *ashrams* were not free from pettiness and self-centeredness. In the post-Gandhian period they suffered more in the absence of the charismatic leader and lost their vitality.

Jhaver Patel brings out an interesting facet of the constructive programmes. One can reconcile the apparent differences through the constructive programmes and can bring harmony. Working for harmony with all the

differences of race, language, culture and economic conditions can bring peace and happiness. Blum asks Jhaver Patel whether during his lifetime Gandhi commented on the difficulties of getting people to do constructive work. Jhaver Patel answers in the affirmative that not many brainy and gifted persons would be attracted. The reasons are obvious. There is no publicity in such work. Moreover, it is hard work, demanding and staying in villages without opportunities; while for political work, one stays in towns. Sushila Nayar feels that Gandhi was right in emphasizing the importance of constructive work. Constructive work is important for preparation of *satyagraha* and political activities. It, however, is not easy. One must have patience, training and perseverance to go ahead.

Much has been written about Gandhi's views on machines and technology. It is often presumed that he was against technology and machines. His associates do not agree. An intellectual like J.B. Kripalani and a person rooted in the soil like Jhaver Patel emphatically maintain that Gandhi's prime idea was that man should not be a slave to them, rather he should master them. He advocated simple, indigenous, efficient and decentralized technology. J.B. Kripalani also brings to our notice that Gandhi was all the time experimenting. He had said that everything against human reason should be discarded. If that is the essence of science, he was very scientific. However, his science was humanist in its orientation and not the physical science.

Gandhi's views on caste have been hotly debated. Gandhi is often criticized for propagating the hierarchy of castes. J.B. Kripalani, however, believes that Gandhi was against caste. He said that originally caste did not mean

superiority or inferiority; it was according to the work one did. In the same vein Jhaver Patel also says that Gandhi believed in division of functions but not in social divisions. He was for equality. There are two aspects in human life: welfare and development. The communists provide welfare but not development of personality. Gandhi, however, provides both.

Gandhi's associates have consciously or unconsciously taken something from him in their efforts for the betterment of the society. Raihana Tyabji, a woman from a Muslim aristocratic family, has been influenced by the spiritual dimensions of Gandhi's life and ideas. Her insights reflect her sensitivity and originality rooted in her spiritual pursuits. Sushila Nayar, on the other hand, is a professional, a politician and a constructive worker. She reflects the pragmatic dimension of Gandhi's work and ideas. Sucheta Kripalani, a person who worked hard during the days of Partition, and after Independence got involved in electoral politics, and retains her own rational perspective of Gandhi's ideas. These three women subtly bring out Gandhi's tenderness and special relation to women. Dada Dharmadhikari and J.B. Kripalani are both highly respected men of their times, who chose to remain away from power and institutions. They present an original and intellectual analysis of Gandhi's ideas. Jhaver Patel brings the flavour of the grassroots and presents a no-nonsense perspective.

Gandhi never wished to carve out his name in the history of mankind. When once asked to guide the conduct of his followers when engaged in a political controversy, his response was, '...I claim no follower. It is enough for me to be my own follower. It is by itself a sufficiently taxing

performance' (Young India 1931c). Gandhi's ideas have preserved their freshness. His intense efforts for betterment of the 'teeming millions' can be the guiding principles today. He successfully delegitimizes the legitimacy theories and talks in new terms. He instills self-confidence in humiliated persons and makes mankind aware of the 'enemy within'. He visualizes a free society and asks members to take up their responsibilities. He raises relevant though uncomfortable questions, and presents political concepts with ethical dimensions.

Conclusion

These interviews are undoubtedly rich and thought provoking. Blum is a sensitive scholar who understands India and Gandhi, and manages to capture the essence of the interviewee's perspective as well as characteristics of Gandhi's ideas. Interviewees, on the other hand, are sharp, frank and committed. The limitations of such interviews, however, cannot be ignored. Factors such as limitation of time and advanced age and willingness to share are very important. Though most of the interviewees are amazingly frank, time and age put limitations. One wishes they had shared more. It has to be noted, however, that all talk clearly about Gandhi's vision, his qualities, their struggle for justice and their lessons as well as disagreements with Gandhi. Each, however, is different and distinct. Raihana Tyabji talks more from a spiritual perspective. She is not involved with people as others are. Sushila Nayar, in spite of her deep involvement with Gandhi and later people, is guarded and prefers not to talk about Gandhi's experiments in celibacy. Sucheta

Kripalani comes out as a transparent person involved with people. J.B. Kripalani, her life partner, shares these traits. He and Dada Dharmadhikari provide original intellectual insights into Gandhi's ideas. Jhaver Patel, who has worked from grassroots level to the Planning Commission, has formed his own analysis which is important in hind sight.

Gandhi's vision encompasses all the aspects of life. His close colleagues, friends and followers had realized this. They were aware of his intense and incessant search for truth, his insistence on the purity of the end and means, his various engagements and fads, his eventful journey of life and his evolving thought process. They learnt a lot from him by living with and arguing with him. This in turn also helped Gandhi in his own quest for emancipation. Prominent members of his team like J.B. Kripalani, Sushila Nayar and Sucheta Kripalani followed him, but not blindly. They had their own views and independent thinking. All of them, in their own ways, helped him in clarifying his ideas, planning his strategies and implementing his plans. Gandhi had always provided space for persons from different strands of life. He never wanted to build any hierarchy and respected diversities and pluralities as they are. The interviewees here bring out subtleties and special nuances of his thought process. These interviews once again make us aware of the freshness and force of his ideas and work.

Gandhi's name in contemporary times surfaces in different contexts, in myriad ways, in scholarly conferences as well as devotional congregations. The high and mighty have no hesitation in swearing by his name; the scholars keep themselves engaged in discourses and writings inspired by

his ideas; the creative minds find his life inspirational; and most importantly, the suppressed and the deprived always find solace in his words and deeds. Non-violent movements, environmentalists and human rights activists are inspired by him. Although dated in some respects, he remains relevant in many others. He encourages us to question inequality and injustice around us and to undertake our own journey in search of truth. Every age discovers its own Gandhi and ours is no different.

2

Fred J. Blum *(1914–1990)*

FRED BLUM'S LIFELONG commitment to non-violence and his search to understand Gandhi's approach to social, economic and spiritual issues, was grounded in his traumatic experiences of growing up in Nazi Germany. He was born in 1914 in a liberal professional Jewish family, many of whose members including both his parents died in the Holocaust, his mother in Auschwitz. Fred himself had managed to leave Germany in the mid-1930s to gain his Swiss undergraduate degree in Sociology and Economics at the University of Geneva. He was passing through London the day World War II broke out, traveling on an American visa that was to enable him to undertake his Doctorate at the University of California in Berkeley.

Over the next two decades spent in America, Fred completed his doctoral degree and laid the foundation for his particular ways of pursuing the three great questions that

were to shape and inform both his personal life and his professional commitments and initiatives:

- What does it mean to be human?
- How does consciousness develop in individuals and in cultures?
- How do spirituality and ethics relate to every-day living—especially the life of work and the experience of community?

In the early days of World War II, it was local Quakers in Berkeley, befriending and supporting ‘enemy–alien’ refugee students like himself, who nourished and deepened his hunger for understanding non-violence. He was welcomed as a member of The Society of Friends without any need to disown his Jewish heritage.

Also while studying in Berkeley during the War, Fred discovered that Gandhi’s writings were extremely difficult to obtain in the United States (US). He made contact with the Navajivan Trust in Ahmedabad, and along with a fellow student not only obtained Gandhi’s publications for his own use, but also set up a mail-order book service solely for the purpose of disseminating Gandhi’s works in the US.

Fred’s doctoral dissertation was expanded and much later published by Harper as *Towards a Democratic Work Process* (1955). It was based on action research into the effects of a Guaranteed Annual Wage and other innovative structures of power in the organisation of work that had been recently initiated at the Hormel ‘Spam’ factory in Minnesota.

Eventually Fred obtained his American citizenship and went to Washington in 1946, to take up government

research posts and to teach at Howard University part-time, becoming a Visiting Professor. In 1955, he worked as a Consultant for the US Senate Committee on Labour and Public Welfare, when the Committee was chaired by Senator John F. Kennedy, who would later become President.

A further important part of the foundation for Fred's future work, especially the Gandhi interview project, was created by his experience as a fellow and consultant to the Research Center for Group Dynamics at The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, during 1949–1954. There he was part of a lively innovative group of sociologists and psychologists who were developing new interdisciplinary approaches to social science, using the concepts and tools of group dynamics and action research. Action research, which became one of Fred's main ways of working, aimed to overcome the limitations to social science research created by models based solely on the mathematical physical sciences. It involved very substantial recorded depth interviews of a number of key people involved in the subject of study. These interviews, which were conducted following a very carefully planned research schedule, were subsequently transcribed and coded to provide a basis for overall conclusions (and where appropriate, recommendations), as well as preserving apt quotations and first-hand reports from interviewees.

Fred then joined the staff of the University of Minnesota, becoming Assistant and Associate Professor and eventually Co-Chairman of the Social Science Program during 1955–1959. During these years he continued his action research on a consultancy basis, increasingly focussing on Quaker

firms that were exploring the humanly positive effects of alternative ways of organising their companies.

Fred's eventual return to Europe began with a sabbatical year in 1958–59 to study innovative British firms committed to new structures of ownership, power and work. This research was the basis for his two books *Work and Community* (Routledge Kegan Paul 1968) and *The Ethics of Industrial Man* (Routledge 1970). Fred's trans-Atlantic sabbatical and professorial exchange arrangements stretched on until 1963 when he finally resigned his US academic post and committed himself and his family to a future based in England.

Fred's keen interest in Gandhi continued, and his move to England enabled him to develop his previous interests in ways that led forward into much richer personal and professional associations with Gandhians in England and India. In the turbulent 1960s he developed a series of three-day seminar-conferences, focussed on the contemporary relevance of radical social witness in major Western religious traditions, including, of course, the Quaker and other non-violent approaches that were of particular interest to him. To these conferences he invited a number of leading thinkers, including Gandhians, who were actively involved in exploring new ways of organising society.

Fred was becoming known in Indian as well as English Gandhian circles, and in 1965–66 he was invited by Jayaprakash Narayan to participate in a conference on the 'Social Responsibilities of Business'. This consultation was jointly sponsored by the Gandhian Institute of Studies in Varanasi and the India International Centre in New Delhi.

Fred wrote and published a number of papers related to this and other meetings he attended in India over the following decade. He received another invitation to participate in an international seminar in Delhi in 1970 in honour of Gandhi Centenary. He stayed on in India after each conference, travelling to villages and *ashrams* to meet elderly Gandhians who had worked directly with Gandhi when they were much younger. The Gandhi Peace Foundation and Indian friends supported and helped him in many ways.

A follow-up invitation from the Indian government, this time by the Khadi Commission, brought Fred to India in 1970–71 to undertake research in new developments in spinning and other village industries in Bihar and Madras (now Tamil Nadu). This research involved evaluation of the extent to which the *khadi* industry was or was not actually practising Gandhi's principles related to the organisation of work and community.

In the stimulating context of all these meetings and opportunities, Fred devised and committed himself to his 'Gandhi Interview Project' that became a key part of his work during 1970s and early 1980s and produced the interviews some of which form this book. By 1973, when Fred returned to India after attending a conference in Sri Lanka on 'Religion and Development in Asian Society', he had most of his plans for the project in place and was able to test out his interview schedule with his first interviewee.

Fred's vision and intention for this project was to interview as many of the outstanding men and women as possible who had personally worked with Gandhiji. Fred's interviews were aimed at discovering what these people had

understood Gandhi's social and economic witness to be, both in Gandhi's own time and as guiding inspiration and principles for the issues of the late 20th century.

Meanwhile, Fred continued to develop the scope of his ongoing work in England, drawing on Jungian insights and his own further thinking and writing on spiritual aspects of social witness and action. The charity organization he had founded in 1967 as The New Era Centre established a residential community near Oxford in 1980 at The Abbey Sutton Courtenay. The Abbey became the base for Fred's work, as well as a dedicated conference and retreat centre, with a fine library that still includes an extensive collection of Gandhi's works. Among the earliest events taking place at The Abbey was the annual British Gandhi Foundation Summer School that continues to be held there including most recently in 2009.

Fred Blum's decision to be ordained as an Anglican priest two years before his death in 1990 was consonant with his conviction that we are witnessing 'The End of Secular Man'. He believed that men and women of spiritual commitment from all faiths and none, must together be witness to ways of establishing a new era of Truth and Justice. He would have been delighted to know that this book will carry forward the Gandhian message he so passionately cared about, researched and recorded.

Arna Blum
December 2009

3

J.B. Kripalani

JIVATRAM BHAGWANDAS KRIPALANI (1888–1982) has left a distinct mark on Indian politics in pre- as well as post-Independence India. He was Gandhi's colleague, a participant as well as an analyst of the freedom struggle, an independent thinker and writer with an incisive mind, and was an important figure in public life who set high moral standards for democratic opposition.

Due to his involvement with nationalist politics in student days, he had to leave studies at Wilson College, Bombay and D.J. Sind College, Karachi. Finally he completed B.A. from Fergusson College, Pune and MA in History from Bombay University. He taught at a college in Muzaffarpur in Bihar from 1912 to 1917 and at Benares during 1919–20. He also served as the Principal of the Gujarat Vidyapith, founded by Mahatma Gandhi, for five years, till 1927. It was here that he was called *Acharya* (Professor).

Meeting Gandhi was a turning point in his life. In March 1915, it was at Shantiniketan that Kripalani first met Gandhi, who was then an unknown figure in the Indian

political scene. There were no immediate sparks between them. Kripalani observed that Gandhi 'was a somewhat eccentric specimen of an England-returned educated Indian. Everything around him appeared curious and even quixotic.' However, after meeting Gandhi later in 1917 during the Champaran *satyagraha*, he was drawn to Gandhi's ideas and work and got completely involved in the nationalist movement spearheaded by Gandhi. He did not have unflinching faith in the efficacy of non-violence, and never hesitated to express his feelings to Gandhi. The famous retort made by Gandhi once to this expression was that history had not yet written the last word. History later showed unprecedented power of non-violent struggle of the people and Kripalani's immense commitment to Gandhi's ideas. Kripalani was imprisoned several times for participating in the freedom movement and remained involved, till the end of his life, with public causes and constructive work on Gandhian lines. Even though an ardent exponent of Gandhi's ideas, he never put Gandhi on pedestal. He sought to understand Gandhi. In his own words he was a 'humble interpreter' of Gandhi's thought 'to others in more modern and understandable terms'.

Kripalani's marriage with Sucheta Mazumdar in 1936 turned out to be a happy life-long bond, based on closest understanding, despite their different, and at times even opposite, political views. They even sat in the Parliament as members of different political parties. When their friendship became strong before marriage, Kripalani realized that 'in those days that would have led to loose talk, in which the woman suffers more than the man; I did not want that'. So they decided to get married. Their friends and families

had opposed the marriage, because of the differences in their age and family backgrounds. Gandhi himself had expressed strong opposition to this marriage as he feared losing Kripalani, a great worker with him, to the bliss of marriage and family. Marriage was further delayed also because of long imprisonment of Jawaharlal Nehru. Kripalani could not think of getting married while his close friend was in prison. Kripalani and Sucheta got married in April 1936. Vijayalakshmi and Swaroop Rani, Nehru's sister and mother, arranged a reception for close friends at their residence. Gandhi did not give his blessings but said that he would 'pray' for them. Later Sucheta became very close to Gandhi, and Kripalani and Nehru developed strong political differences.

Kripalani was the General Secretary of the Congress from 1934 to 1945. He was elected President of the Indian National Congress in November 1946. He resigned soon thereafter due to ideological differences with his colleagues. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly and was elected to the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Parliament) during 1952, 1957, 1963 and 1967. He never hesitated expressing views that differed from those of his closest colleagues. He gradually drifted away politically from many of his old colleagues and ultimately he resigned from the Congress Party in 1951. He floated a new political party, the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, which subsequently merged with the Socialist Party to become the Praja Socialist Party. But in 1954 he resigned from the chairmanship of Praja Socialist Party and severed his connections with the party in 1960. He fiercely retained his independence for the rest of his parliamentary life. He was a strong critic of

the emergency imposed during Indira Gandhi's tenure as the Prime Minister. He, with Jayaprakash Narayan, helped in the formation and victory of the Janata Party in 1977.

He has written some thought-provoking books on Gandhian philosophy such as *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, *The Gandhian Way* and *Gandhi: the Statesman* that display his original approach and high intellectual quality. In 1950 he started a weekly named *Vigil* to create awareness about the economic and social issues and Gandhi's ideas, but it had to be folded up after ten years for want of funds.

Kripalani's commitment to social and economic regeneration of India, his uncompromising stand on moral and ethical principles, his deep concern for the poor and unemployed and his insistence on high values in public life coupled with his irrepressible wit, razor-sharp mind matched only by equally sharp expressions put him in a class by itself. Sarojini Naidu had called him a 'distinguished vagabond'. Various stages of his rich and multifaceted life spanning over almost a century—from an independent bright young man to a respected national leader—reflect the ups, downs and trepidations of his times and his unwavering commitment to the people and his passion for democratic norms.

In conversation (21 and 22 December 1973)



FRED J. BLUM (FJB): Where and when you first met Gandhi?

J.B. KRIPALANI (K): I met him in the beginning of 1915 when he came from England. He had gone to England from South Africa to meet Gokhale who happened to be there. Gandhi first came to the poet's *ashram*, Shantiniketan.

I had some connection with that *ashram*. I was informed that Gandhiji would be coming there. I was a professor in a college in Bihar. I took leave and went to Shantiniketan and met him. I had heard about his Non-cooperation Movement in South Africa. I was anxious to see whether that kind of agitation could work here. I met him, I found him in many respects, a man out of the way.

FJB: Out of the way?

K: He had no conventions about him. He was neither dressed as a barrister, nor as a gentleman in India. He was wearing the dress that is worn by the villagers here. And his habits of food were also quite different. At that time he was living on fruits, and generally he was taking nuts. And while I was there he brought about a revolution in the life of the poet's *ashram*. He saw that the food that was being cooked was not hygienic and neither were the surroundings hygienic. He thought that this was because the inmates did not do any physical work themselves, and left everything to their servants. So he induced the teachers and the pupils to work together and do all the work of the *ashram* themselves, such as sweeping, keeping it clean, cooking, and washing their utensils. And this was done while I was there.

In seven days, his whole approach was so contagious that people could not resist his personality and they readily accepted his views. They also felt that those views had substance. So in seven days' time everything was changed and people, teachers and the students, began to work. What impressed me most was that he was a person who, when

he had an idea, would put it into practice himself, before he kept it before the public. Also he was a man who could stand alone. If he thought a thing to be right then he would do it himself and ask others to do it. He was not afraid of public opinion as it is considered in the current affairs. He had his own ideas and he stuck to them. He had, as a matter of fact, seemed to think of almost every question that affects the life of the individual and the community, and he would stick to his views, if he thought he was right, against the whole world. That is why I was attracted to him. And I told him that if he wanted to do something in India, he can count upon me and he can call me because I had no particular attachments or particular obligations to discharge. I was alone, I was a bachelor, and I was professor in a University. So that is how I came in contact with him.

FJB: That is very interesting. Can you say a little bit more what happened then, that is, in which way you worked with Gandhi?

K: It happened thus. In Bihar there were indigo planters. They were Englishmen. They had obtained land from local landlords and cultivated indigo in those lands. But they did not cultivate the land themselves. They sublet the land to tenants so that every tenant had to cultivate one-third or one-sixth of the land with indigo. Indigo cultivation is rather difficult, and it requires great labour. Not only did they have contracts with the tenants to cultivate indigo, but also, when they got the land, they extracted from them many other advantages. They took away labour to work on their own land. They took subscriptions from them on special occasions, such as when their son was getting

married or when they went to the hills, or when they went to England. They got illegal contributions from these tenants, which the tenants opposed. One of them had heard of Gandhiji, and he followed Gandhiji wherever he went. He told Gandhiji that he must come to that land in Bihar, which was called Champaran.

FJB: Gandhiji mentions your name in his autobiography.

K: Yes. Now, the headquarters of these planters were in Muzaffarpur, a place where I was a professor, and Champaran is only a small district in Muzaffarpur division. So if he had to go to Champaran he must first come to Muzaffarpur, because he did not want to do anything without first meeting those people. He knew nobody, except me. So he wired to me that he was coming by an unearthly train which reached Muzaffarpur at about 12.30 in the morning. It was difficult to find him out in that great crowd, because he travelled third class and the stations in Bihar are always very crowded, because it is one of the thickly populated provinces in India. So I could not find him, and he could not find me. I was the only man he knew, and I was the only one who knew him.

I had arranged a batch of my students to welcome him, so he himself got a little confused. He saw these young men coming here and there and searching for him. I missed him, and he told a villager to ask those people why they had come. They said they had come to meet Mr Gandhi. Then he indicated the man near him! You see, he was always like this. His luggage consisted of a small bedding which was carried by the villager and in his hand he had his papers wound up in a cloth. That was all he had. I took him to my

place. The next day I called the local lawyers who knew the subject of cultivation and its rules and regulations. Then he went to see the Commissioner of the division.

The Commissioner asked, 'Why have you come here? Everything is all right. You are an outsider, your presence will create trouble in this country.' He went to the planters, they also said the same thing and that he must take the first train and get out from there. He said, 'Nothing doing'.

He then went into the interior where the trouble was because he wanted to see for himself. Then a notice was served upon him that he must leave the place within 24 hours. He refused. He was put up in the Court of Law and there he gave his explanation that he is a peace-loving citizen. Ordinarily he would not break the law but when the law itself is illegal, his conscience would not allow him to obey the law and he was breaking the law. The magistrate might pass any sentence that he considered could be imposed by the law. When he said that, the magistrate was in an awkward position. What was he to do? Such a thing has never happened in India.

The news spread throughout the region that such and such man had come to look into the grievances of the peasants, that he had been arrested and taken to the Court, and that he had pleaded guilty and did not want to leave. So there were crowds of people coming to see him. In the meantime he wrote to the Viceroy and Governor that he had come on a peaceful mission and he was arrested like that. And then those people—these were the days of the war—they did not want this man to be on their hands, so orders came and he was released. And he began his work. Since I had entertained him while being a professor in a

government college, I was told that my services were dispensed with. So I went and joined him.

FJB: You mean your services as a professor were dispensed with because you had put him up?

K: Because I had put him up.

FJB: Was that illegal?

K: It was not illegal, but there was no legality or illegality in those days here. Otherwise how could an Englishman tell Gandhiji that he was an outsider and he should not have come there. They themselves had come five thousand miles away. There was no law so far as political matters were concerned. The British kept the law for the Indians when those were not political matters. But as far as political matters were concerned, and their own empire was being shaken, because every opposition was kind of a nail in their coffin, they would not allow any political agitation to take place, law or no law.

FJB: And they could just dismiss you like that?

K: Yes.

FJB: Then you went with Gandhi?

K: I went with Gandhi, who then began Non-cooperation Movement on account of the Rowlatt Bills. I was with him and I joined him, thence forward I was all along with him, whether I was the President of the Congress or the General Secretary. After all we could not drive away the Britishers by firing a few pistols at individuals. And a revolution was not possible for us because the Britishers had taken away our arms. They had disarmed the whole country. So the only

possible way was non-cooperation. We were many, they were few. If we non-cooperated with them they would only starve in this land. But they had the power so they could carry on and repress our movement from time to time. We also persisted, and then the Second World War began. And in the changes brought about in the Second World War, the Britishers had lost the flower of their youth. And they were shrewd people, the nation of shopkeepers. They wanted to cut their losses. Therefore they were willing to grant us freedom. And they also found that they could not keep hold upon an insurgent India, a revolutionary India for any length of time with their depleted resources in men, material, money and everything. England was more exhausted than any other country.

FJB: I would like to look a little bit closer. There were three main national movements, the Non-cooperation Movement, the Salt *Satyagraha*, and the Quit India Movement. Can you say a little bit how, and in which way were you involved in the Non-cooperation Movement?

K: The Non-cooperation Movement began by breaking some law, not any law that prescribed moral conduct, but any law that was against the interests of the country. For instance, first of all, Gandhiji began by selling proscribed literature, that is legitimate literature.

FJB: That was in Bombay?

K: That was in Bombay. He began like that, then after the Jalianwala Bagh incident, and after the passing of the Rowlatt Bills, a bigger movement was necessary, so he had prepared in Gujarat, Bardoli sub-division to be the place

where he would begin his Non-cooperation Movement. He converted the Congress to his views, so that Congress also adopted the idea that freedom can be achieved through non-violence and through truthful means. Having converted the Congress in 1920 at Calcutta, and again at Nagpur, and having got control of the Congress machinery, he proceeded further.

He wanted to try his experiments, because he knew that the people could not be kept non-violent under great repression. So he wanted to begin his Non-cooperation Movement in Bardoli, where he had worked with the peasants, where the peasants had given a good account of themselves. And unfortunately, as he was going to begin it, and those people had taken the vow that they would be non-violent and truthful, there was the Chauri Chaura incident, where people were so repressed that they burst forth and they burnt a police station with people inside. So that was the signal given to him that people had not imbibed the true spirit of non-violence. Therefore, he suspended the movement. But already our leaders were in jail. We were all in jail. Motilal, C.R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, all were in jail. We did not like the suspension of the movement.

FJB: Were you in the Congress at that time?

K: Yes, I was in the Congress.

FJB: You were in the Congress, because the Congress was very much opposed to the suspension. Congress was very unhappy about this suspension?

K: There was, at the time, no Congress as such, because the repression had begun. We were all dispersed; we were in

jails. So it was not a question of Congress but a small committee of the Congress AICC (All India Congress Committee). The Committee supported Gandhiji's stand. But we, who were in jail, and most of us, C.R. Das and others, protested against it. Of course, I trusted Gandhiji and knew what he did and what he loved. And when he suspended the movement, these people wanted to go into the Councils, whether the Councils had power or not, they could denounce the Government without being imprisoned because their speeches would be authorized, would not be amenable to the law and that they could non-cooperate within the Councils. We were opposed to this programme. Then there was a meeting of the Congress in Gaya, and that meeting decided that we must not leave the programme that was placed before the country by Gandhiji.

Gandhiji had always a double programme. One, fighting with the British, like non-cooperation, and the other, constructive work, serving the people and improving their moral and physical condition. For instance, propagating *swadeshi*, wearing cloths made here and also cloth made in the villages, *khadi* and *charkha*, Hindu-Muslim unity, giving up of drinks and drugs, and removal of untouchability. One was the constructive programme of building the nation, and the other was fighting with the foreigner for independence. Both these programmes were connected, and accepted and the Congress at Gaya said that we must concentrate upon the constructive programme. And so far as fighting is concerned, when time comes, when Gandhiji is also able to guide the movement, we will. Then in two years' time he came out.

The government had thought that since these leaders were not agreeing with him, his influence must have disappeared, so that was the proper time to arrest him. They arrested him and charged him with sedition, and gave him the maximum six years rigorous imprisonment. Well, in two years' time, you see, he had appendicitis and was operated upon of course, by an English surgeon. He could not be operated upon without his consent. And he gave his consent in writing thus, 'I have no objection to be operated by you. I have perfect trust in a medical man that he would not do anything wrong and I am safe in his hands.' So he operated and they became friends. He was becoming weaker and weaker, and there was pressure also from England, and he was released from jail. When he was released from jail he brought about a rapprochement between those who wanted no changes, like those who had stuck to Gandhiji's programmes, and those who wanted to go into the Councils. He said, 'Let those who want to go to the Councils, go to the Councils, let them have their programme.' And that was how the Swaraj Party was formed within the Congress, and I just had to do the constructive work.

FJB: Congress supported the constructive work?

K: Yes. They accepted the constructive work. The constructive work became revolutionary, because it was attached to the political one. It was not the work like the missionaries. Though the missionaries also do such kind of work, well, they do that in the name of Christ. But this was attached to the political movement, and therefore it was revolutionary work.

FJB: During the salt *satyagraha* where were you?

K: I was with him in his *ashram* at Sabarmati. I did not go with the 78 people who went with him because I was not an inmate of the *ashram*. I lived there, I was also the Principal of the National College in Ahmedabad started by Gandhi. So I was there, I saw them moving, the government was indifferent. They said he is a mad man and thought he will go to the sea, after 25 days he will reach the sea and he will pick up salt there. What is there in salt? They never knew what salt was at all. The officers were ridiculing the whole thing. But as days passed, there was something like a snowball, enthusiasm of the people kept on rising. Wherever he went, he was received and the villagers, men, women, children, all came to receive them, fed them and he went to the next stage. Every time that he moved, from day-to-day, the tempo of the people of India was rising. In 25 days the government also realized that this was not such an innocent thing as they had thought to be, it was going to be a revolution. And then they began their repressive movement which they carried on for one full year, and we were all thrown into jail. Then they had their repression. They were tired of their repression. And we were also tired. So some kind of an arrangement, what is called the Gandhi–Irwin Pact, was signed, so that salt could be manufactured freely. The salt tax was not taken away. Why Gandhiji chose salt tax has also a history of its own.

The salt tax was the most vicious tax that the British imposed upon people, because salt is used by the poor and the rich. A rich man does not take more salt than the poor man, and cattle also take salt. The salt tax was introduced in the eighteenth century, in the days of the East India

Company. East India Company could bring nothing from Europe or from their own country to India. They had to take away things from India. India, in those days, did not need anything, neither cloth nor anything else. Everything was produced here as in other countries in those days. Of course, the production was not steam-worked in mills and factories because there was no steam or power then. It came afterwards. Now, how were they to bring their ships here? The ships must have some ballast, so they put salt manufactured in England as ballast to the ships, that it may be sold in India, so that at least their freight may be collected. So they put salt duty, excise duty on Indian salt. We had a flourishing salt industry that was destroyed by that excise duty. And in the market this cheaper salt from England was being sold and that gave them freight for bringing their ships here so that they can take away things from here, and sell them at a profit in England and over the continent. So this was the most iniquitous duty.

FJB: The third major event was the Quit India Movement. Were you there?

K: Yes, for the Quit India Movement also I was there.

FJB: Were you President of the Congress then?

K: No, I became President immediately after 1946 and 1947.

FJB: And where were you during the movement itself?

K: I was in jail. I was a member of the Working Committee. I was the General Secretary of the Congress and we were all taken away to the Ahmednagar Fort. People did

not know where we were taken. For thirty days we did not get any newspaper, and our people did not get any news of where we were.

FJB: When you sort of look back on your life and how it was influenced by your decision to join Gandhi, what things stand out?

K: I was a Professor of History. The whole of history is a tale of blood and iron. As you know I did not believe in non-violence, nor did I believe in truth in politics. At first I had long discussions. When we were in Champaran, I had long discussions with Gandhiji. Sometimes he used to get annoyed also. I said, 'Do you mean to say that this nation of shopkeepers is going to leave India by your non-violence? You are talking nonsense.'

FJB: What did he say?

K: He said, 'You are a non-believer'. Those days he believed in the good intentions of the British government. I said, 'What! You are talking about the good intentions of these fellows? They have enslaved the country, they have destroyed our industries.' But he thought that the English people are liberal. He belonged to the Gokhale school of thought; I belonged to the Tilak school of thought. But I thought that he was a sincere man and he meant business and that if the time for a struggle comes, he will stand up. Therefore, I joined him, not because I believed in truth and non-violence. Slowly and slowly I was converted to his point of view. And from that time onwards, if I may say so without any pride, my politics have been very clean. I began to believe in his idea that ends and means are convertible

terms—if you take care of the means, ends will take care of themselves. And I have never in my political life subordinated means to ends, that I can claim for myself. Whether I am non-violent or not, I cannot claim, because I sometimes burst into anger. I am not non-violent in thoughts, words and deeds as he wanted us to be, because after all, you cannot, you see, forcibly put an inch to your stature, your physical stature, and you cannot, you see, forcibly put also an inch to your moral stature. You must grow into a thing, so I have grown into this, I do not subordinate, you see, means to ends, but I cannot say that I am non-violent. As for truthful, I think I am, though at times when I am bothered on the phone, I say that ‘Kripalani is busy’, or ‘Mrs Kripalani won’t come, she is not at home’, whether she was at home or not.

FJB: This leads really directly to my next question. You have partly answered it already, but I still ask it, what did non-violence mean to you? What was, for you, personally, non-violence, or *ahimsa*? What did these mean to you?

K: I only talk of *ahimsa* as something social, as working in society. There are two kinds of non-violence. One is the non-violence of Christ. It has no social implication, it is for the salvation of the soul. It is not used for correcting wrongs in society, it is not used for bringing about equality, it is not used for taking away foreign rule, because after all Palestine was under the Roman rule but Christ did not bother about it. His non-violence was pure and simple. It was not non-violent resistance. What distinguishes Gandhiji is that he made non-violence as an instrument for correcting political, social and economic wrongs.

This distinction you must understand. This distinction is not even understood by the followers of Gandhiji here.

FJB: Even now?

K: Even now. Gandhiji thought that if he was non-violent in social life, ultimately he will get salvation. But salvation directly was not his aim; if he did his duty and he did it non-violently, salvation will come. But he wanted to use non-violence as an instrument for bringing about justice in the world, between man and man, between nation and nation, between nations that are in slavery and nations that are free. Even there this instrument can work. It had a social content; it was not meant for the salvation of the soul directly. This distinction must be kept. So I followed Gandhiji in the non-violence that has social content, that is meant to correct wrongs, that is meant to bring about justice, that can be worked in the political, economic and social fields. So far as salvation is concerned, personally I am not bothered about it.

FJB: Now, you were close to Gandhi for a long stretch of time. Do you feel that his ideas of non-violence changed during that time?

K: Non-violence?

FJB: Yes. Did his ideas about non-violence, or *satyagraha*, did they change?

K: Yes, as an action. Whatever he might have felt in his mind, I don't know. He himself was, you see, non-violent in thought, word and deed. That might bring his salvation, but he used this non-violence as an instrument for fighting;

this must be made clear. I can give you a little pamphlet which I have issued recently bringing out the distinction between non-violent resistance and non-violence. Because Christ said, 'Resist no evil and walk two miles if you are asked to walk one, give your cloak if you are asked to give your coat'. Gandhiji would never have said this. He said, 'Why should I? There must be some reason for my walking the first mile even.' You see the distinction? We have in our Hindu religion both sides, but in Hindu religion there is also non-violence. In Buddhism, in Jainism, in Hinduism, it is used for personal salvation. It is one of the many moral qualities that a man has to possess. Truth and non-violence are very fundamental in all these religions.

FJB: Yes, I can see the difference. I want to ask you another question in that context. You see, when you speak to people who are skeptical about non-violence and Gandhi, they often say, 'well, it worked in India with the British, but it would not work anywhere else'. What would you say to that? What would you answer to this kind of statement?

K: Well, I can't answer that, but Gandhiji answered it. Gandhiji said our non-violence should match the violence of Hitler. But I can't say that human nature has risen to such heights except in some individuals. Collectively human nature has not reached to that height that they can bear without resistance, without active, violent resistance, to say, the tyranny of a Hitler. Because you see, for Gandhiji, whatever was theoretically possible was also practically possible. There I don't agree with Gandhiji. Things may be theoretically possible; we have never seen the theoretical possible. Even in geometry the point must be in a space,

it must have certain dimensions, so though Gandhiji said what is theoretically possible is also practically possible, or at least should be made practically possible, that is too theoretical a view for me to accept.

FJB: I see, Gandhi said that?

K: There is a certain amount of repression that people can bear. They are in concentration camps, tyranny goes on, they can do nothing about it, but in Gandhiji's view they can also give up their life and yet resist.

FJB: You know many people would say, especially in the West, who look back with interest in Gandhi, speak about it as a dialectic movement. Does that make any sense to you? In which way do you see it?

K: Gandhiji's thought was dialectic.

FJB: In which way?

K: That he synthesized things, that he had no airtight compartments, for instance, life. Life is one; it is not divided into airtight compartments. There is no such thing as political life separate from a moral life, from a spiritual life; there is no such thing as economic life separate from political and moral life. In that way, you see, he synthesized things which are considered to be opposite; in that sense his thought was dialectical.

FJB: Were they also considered as opposites in India?

K: Oh, yes. This action always existed through the ages. The greatest contribution of Gandhiji, I should think is

this that life is one, singular, it can't be divided into water-tight compartments.

FJB: I mean, this is something you said in your own book.

K: I hope I said, I don't remember now.

FJB: I have a passage here. I won't ask you to comment on this. It says:

The Indian effort has always been to resolve apparent contradictions through a dialectical process of its own. This does not require destructive revolutions to eliminate the thesis and the antithesis and establish on their destruction a temporary unstable synthesis. Co-ordination is achieved for the force of thought by virtue of certain basic ideas. The genius of the Indian people is constructive, catholic and assimilative. It is neither negative nor destructive.

I wonder, could you elaborate just a little bit on the genius of the Indian people because I am very much interested to understand what this genius is.

K: It naturally requires a study of the Hindu religion.

FJB: Yes.

K: First of all, you know that we have the *Vedas* and we have also the *Vedants*. The *Vedas* are concerned with ceremonials and other things. *Vedant* is pure fundamental thought. How were these two things combined? That was the first synthesis produced in India, between the *Vedas* and the *Vedant*. Then again, you will find in the *Gita*, there are three paths—the path of love, the path of active work and the path of knowledge—which begins with *neti, neti*

not this negating, and the other two are positive. And in the *Gita* there is a comprehensive synthesis of these, and there is also the synthesis of what was called action. Action first meant the performance of ceremonies, sacrifices and all those things. How that is brought about to be the sacrifice of knowledge, sacrifice of your passions, that kind of sacrifice. Not this kind of sacrifice of things. Of course, it would be a very elaborate thing, and I can write a thesis upon it, but I won't.

FJB: Will you? You see I intend to study this much more, because I feel that is very important.

K: Well then again in the Middle Ages how the old scriptures were synthesized with the new ideas that had come with our contact with the Muslims again there was a synthesis. And there is another thing. Europe has scientifically gone ahead. Why? Because its genius is analytical. Science must analyse. You cannot carry on an experiment without analysing. Water, you must analyse, electricity, you must analyze. You must analyze things to produce electricity. You have the advantage that you have proceeded scientifically. The Indian genius is synthetic, it wants to combine what appeared to be opposite.

FJB: I agree with you that the analytical aptitude has been developed in Europe very much, let us say in the last two to three hundred years, but before that I don't see any basic difference in the attitude of a European as compared to an Indian.

K: Quite right, quite right.

FJB: Now, what does that mean in terms of East–West?

K: You see, there was no difference up to the Middle Ages between the East and the West. They were all oriented towards religion, towards spirituality. Spirituality does not cut, it synthesizes. For example, you asked me to describe Gandhi. I can give you twenty qualities of him, but will you get the man?

FJB: No, though I like to know the twenty qualities.

K: You won't get the man; you will not be able to get his activity. It is very easy to analyze things, but analysis doesn't bring about the synthesis that is necessary in order to make a thing.

FJB: When I read about some of the campaigns of Gandhi, he did use analysis to determine what the situation was.

K: That is true.

FJB: I would like to read you one statement from somebody who I think built his reputation on yours, but he puts it differently. This is a book of Lannoy who wrote a very interesting book on India, he says, 'However, the dialectic of *satyagraha* ultimately rests on the mystical premise that realization of truth mutually liberates both parties and establishes them in love for all.'

K: You see, that is true and ultimately it made India. But where does it begin, what is the motive force? Motive force is its salvation, or motive force is establishing some kind of harmony in the world itself. Christ said, 'My kingdom is not of this world, my kingdom is of heaven'. And this is also

true, that some quotations of Gandhiji might take people to think that he was thinking of individual non-violence, because he also says that my aim is to see God face to face. You see, throughout his life, Gandhiji tackled social, political and economic problems. And many Europeans and Americans visited him having heard that he was a Mahatma, and came to him for guidance and *yoga*. He said 'I don't know any *yoga*, all the *yoga* I know is that you go and serve the poor in the villages.' That gives you the distinction very clearly.

FJB: Yes, it is very crucial, this distinction. You mention the twenty qualities that would not give us a picture of Gandhi. But I am now trying to get from you an idea of Gandhi, the man. You know, the kind of person he was. Could you say something or do you want me to ask specific questions? Would you prefer that? Well, for example, did Gandhi ever talk to you about his youth, about his mother, or his father?

K: No, no, he never talked. He talked of his experience in South Africa. Incidents might have come, some story from his earlier childhood, that is a different thing, otherwise he did not talk.

FJB: When you look at Gandhi, I mean you knew him, you knew him in the Indian context, you knew what he did in South Africa, and so on, what do you feel were the most formative influences on him? What were they really?

K: Fundamental Hinduism, the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

FJB: In which way? Can you say more? Because you see, Hinduism is not so easy for us to grasp. Because when we

talk to different people, for them it means different things, not that this is not different when you talk to a Christian.

K: Yes, I understand that, but there are certain fundamentals of Hindu religion which you will find in the *Gita*. There is no other book where you will find it, so the *Gita* must also have some kind of commentary, but to an intelligent man that gives the crux of the question. Gandhiji always said whenever he was in difficulty he turned to the *Gita* for guidance. All this, you see, that he learned many things from the West, but the fundamental fact is that he was a Hindu, and his philosophy was Hindu philosophy, and he learned it from the *Gita*. It might have been reinforced, that also by other contacts he made in Europe, but fundamentally his philosophy is that of the *Gita*—disinterested work, unattached work, work without seeking results, because we can initiate action but results are not possible for us to bring about, results will be brought about by God in his own way, in his own wisdom.

FJB: So, these are the essential things. Now, you see, Gandhi translated the *Gita* in Gujarati and he wrote an interpretation of it. In which way does Gandhi's understanding of the *Gita* really differ from previous understandings?

K: I do not know, there is no such difference. The only difference is this, that some commentators emphasize the religion of love—*bhakti*. Some intellectuals say that God is not this, not that, that you yourself are God, that God is within you, the interpretation of our great Shankaracharya, he is the greatest commentator, his comments ultimately come to this that you are that, you are God himself; this is the intellectual path. And then there is a path of devotion,

of what should I say, of love. Love does not come ready, the significance that *bhakti* comes ready enough, it is devotion, it is attachment, it is something which is... it is subordination that you are nothing. God is everything. He is your father, your mother, your lover, your child, your everything, you see. That kind of love, you see, passionate love, desire to meet him, to see him. You cannot rest without achieving that. That you are a small portion of the big one and that you want to get nearer to the big one. And then the third path is, do your duty without attachments, without caring for results. These are the three paths given in the *Gita*, and the commentators have only differed in emphasizing one or the other.

FJB: I see.

K: Otherwise there is no difference so far as interpretation is concerned. Of course, the setting of the *Gita* is in a war, but how could a great philosophy be built on an ordinary event? It could only be built on a very great event. Because you will find people don't use the *Gita* to fight. Of course, sometimes they use. During the modern times the bomb throwers used to think of the *Gita*, throw the bomb without any personal interest! But this book is carried by every *sanyasi*, every *sadhu* when he has renounced everything. These *sadhus* and *sanyasis* are not thinking of the war that was fought between the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas*, they are thinking in terms of the great message that the *Gita* contains. War is only the background. Even in the war one could fight without being attached, without your mind being diverted from it as a duty. So, this war setting of the *Gita* is only superficial.

FJB: Gandhi, if I am right, felt that the *Gita* really didn't refer to an outer war but an inner struggle?

K: Yes, that is what Gandhiji said. But even when you have, you see, do not accept the interpretation of Gandhi. It is true that this book is woven over a war, and he says how even a soldier can carry on war without hatred, without caring for results, with the spirit of God in him. For instance, how does a magistrate work? He sends somebody to the gallows, but is he a murderer? He is not a murderer because he is doing his duty, he is not thinking. He has no hatred for the criminal. He happens to be in a particular position and he has got to discharge his duty in that position.

FJB: Do you feel Gandhi would have felt that a magistrate would not have to justify what he did in terms of his own conscience?

K: I do not know, but he should. Because during his trial he told the magistrate who was trying him:

If you think that the state in which you are placed, if you think that the government of which you are a limb, is a legitimate government, then you give me the maximum punishment. But if you think that it is not legitimate, then you resign your post.

When you accept a position you have to carry out the requirements of that position. If you think that position is fundamentally wrong, then you leave it. If a soldier thinks that fighting is fundamentally wrong, then the soldier leaves it. But if he does not think that it is fundamentally wrong, he has no hatred for those who are considered his enemies. A common soldier has no hatred at all. He is only doing what he considers to be his duty. That is a kind of external

violence. And there is internal violence. The common soldier doesn't know internal violence. In the magistrate there is no internal hatred if he knows his job well. Am I clear?

FJB: Yes, this is clear. You know you talked about the *Gita*. Have you attended any of Gandhi's prayer meetings?

K: Sometimes I did. Because fundamentally, I don't believe, you see, in the congregational prayers.

FJB: I see. Did he use other texts, or only the *Gita*?

K: Oh yes, many times. Sometimes he talked about the *Gita*. A little portion of it was always recited in his prayers.

FJB: A little portion was always recited in his prayer? But you know, you spoke about, many people tell me, that Gandhi had a very good sense of humour.

K: That is true, but how can I describe that humour? I will tell you a story, but I am not good at that. He went to see the King Emperor, he went in his own dress. They asked him, 'how did you feel before the Emperor?' He said, 'the King was dressed for two.'

FJB: You said that you could easily give twenty characteristics of Gandhi and that this would not make a picture of the whole man. I agree to this and I can see what you mean. But could you still describe a little bit of what was, for you, the outstanding characteristic of Gandhi.

K: His outstanding characteristic was his fearlessness. That he could stand alone, you see. And his utter sincerity, and his determination first to do the thing that he prescribed for others. He did not say go and do this thing, he did it

himself first before he prescribed it for others. Up to the last day of his life he was plying the *charkha* because he had asked people to ply the *charkha*. So these few qualities can give you ... Because he worked in every field of life. As a matter of fact, if that can convey to you any meaning, he cleansed this country from its soul to its lavatories. So how can you ask me to give you the qualities of such a man? He wanted to have what would be the best and the cheapest food for the poor people. He was concerned about how the poor should cultivate the land, make manure, burn the stove economically, all these things. How the housewife should clean her utensils, what hygiene we should practice within and without, what dress would be the most suitable, everything, you see. How can I give you an idea of a man like that?

FJB: But you know there is one aspect of Gandhi's life, *brahmacharya*, that is I think very important and also discussed in many ways. Can you say something about that?

K: For that you read all the history of Christianity and you will find that *brahmacharya* was given a very high place in it. Christ himself was a *brahmachari*, and his followers were *brahmacharis*. But in India even a man who has a family can be a *brahmachari*. It is not necessary to practice celibacy to be a *brahmachari*. And even if you have a child or two and then live off sex, because we do not believe that this fluid is such an ordinary fluid that it does not matter how it flows. We consider this as a lively spirit as a force to be utilized. I will tell you the distinction between a *brahmachari* and one who practices celibacy in the European sense of the term. A *brahmachari* has got to regulate his life

in every way—what he sees, hears, and reads. You cannot be a *brahmachari* and read sex stories, or see sex cinemas, or indulge in what are called ‘heating foods’—taking meat or liquor, and all such things. He has to regulate his life, then he can become a *brahmachari*. If you practice celibacy and do all these things, there would be psychological imbalance somewhere or the other and you will suffer. A celibate in Europe would suffer, a celibate here will not suffer but will be strengthened. Because it is again an integrated thing.

FJB: I see, it is part of a whole.

K: While you are reading sex literature, looking at cinemas and attending the parties, and doing all sorts of things, and you want only to curtail sex, you see, sex act, it cannot be done. If you do it, you will upset your mental balance, then you must have your discharge, you see. Therefore, what appears to be a cause of psychological imbalance in Europe becomes a cause of strength in India, because it is, you see, hedged in by so many rules and regulations. And Gandhiji did follow those rules and regulations, and therefore, he could keep his *brahmacharya*.

FJB: What you said is very helpful. I want to ask you something else. Towards the end of his life when Gandhi engaged in the experiment with women, you wrote him a letter, in which you say, ‘Sometimes I thought that you may be employing human beings as means rather than as ends in themselves.’ I mean this is little abbreviated, you know there is something in between.

K: That was in some other context. I was answering a man who had talked about these experiments of Gandhiji. He

had said that Gandhiji was using human beings as guinea pigs for his experiments. Then I had said that we all use human beings for our experiments. The administrator uses human beings, the General uses human beings, we all use human beings, but whether the human beings that we use have a free will of their own and consent to be so used is a different thing. If I consent to be a soldier then you cannot say the General is using me as a guinea pig. If I am a mature man and if I want to work in any capacity I will have to subordinate myself to somebody else and do I become a guinea pig? I don't become his guinea pig.

FJB: You made one statement in your book that made me very sad. You said that only Western thinkers can convince our intellectuals. Do you feel this is still true?

K: It is still true.

FJB: And what is the reason for that?

K: You see, slavery for two hundred years, and then immediately after Gandhiji we wanted to be as civilized as you are. Therefore, we wanted big industries. We wanted our industry to compete with your industry. So we first went in for big mills and factories without knowing that we had plenty of labour and you had very little of labour and the machines are necessary for those who have little labour, that human beings are themselves a good deal of machinery for producing things. So we are copying the West and there is no going back because all our plans are orientated towards the western type of industry which began in industrial life in Europe, supposed to have begun with the industrial revolution. But the industrial revolution was through

machines worked by power. First it was steam, now it is electricity. We also want to have big industries and big factories while we, our people, are starving. They have no work to do, and yet we want to save human labour. Our human labour should be our capital, but we think that we must get money from you people and borrow money and give interest and sell our independence, but we must be as industrialized as the West is, as if there was no industry in India before the industrial revolution.

FJB: I would like to ask you one more question. You made this distinction very clearly about non-violence, which is 'don't resist evil', and social action. Now, there is a Western interpreter of Gandhi, whom I personally esteem. There are a number of questions that I have about what he says. He says here that '*satyagraha* has projected the traditional ethical laws in the realm of social action'.

K: That is true.

FJB: This is the crucial transformation. What I wanted comes now. He says, 'And its source is not to be found in Hinduism, not in any other Indian value system, but in the unique psychological make-up of Gandhi himself.' Now, what does that mean?

K: That is true in its place. You see, because this was Gandhiji's own invention. Making use of truth and non-violence as weapons for establishing justice was Gandhiji's own original idea, but it has bases as I told you.

FJB: In Hinduism?

K: But supposing he had not been born, you see, as he was, in the *Vaishnavite* family, influenced by Jainism, where even

scorpions are not killed. You must understand. The origin of thing is something different from what it develops.

FJB: Yes, I can see that. What puzzles me is the reference to Gandhi's psychological makeup.

K: His psychological make-up was that. You see, during his whole life in England he remained a vegetarian. He was born in a vegetarian family, his people believed in non-violence as the supreme virtue. Therefore, he could make non-violence and truth as instruments also in the social life. But it was his own invention; you will not find it in Christianity, or anywhere. He says that truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. But they are not as old as the hills as Gandhiji has put them into practice. Gandhiji was very modest. This was his unique contribution. If there is any contribution that Gandhiji made, it was this, to apply the moral law to the political, economic and social life.

FJB: Now I want to ask you a small question in connection with law. You use the word law in many ways, like the law of love, the law of self-suffering, in a way usually not used in the West.

K: Of course, moral law is used.

FJB: Moral law is used, but then it is always the moral law. You don't hit your neighbour on the head, you see? That is used. But the word, for instance, the law of love, you will find very rarely. And I think it has a significance, that you use it in terms of a law. I wonder whether you could say a little bit more about what this means to you?

K: I would say law has two significances. One is that of control, and the other is that of wider application. I should

say universal application. But universal application would be too much, when it is accepted by a section of humanity. It should be acceptable to all humanity, but for that it requires restraint, discipline, and acceptability by a body of persons.

FJB: And it is in that universal sense that you are using it?

K: Yes, in that sense.

FJB: And in that sense it has, for you, quite an objective meaning, is that true?

K: Objective, yes, but subjective too.

FJB: Yes, can you say a little bit more about this objective—subjective, in which way?

K: Objective—subjective because law has reference to other people also. Law cannot be practiced in isolation. In isolation it can be only a habit. You might have habits but there is no law, an individual might have habits, but law implies that there are other people who are also concerned. Robinson Crusoe on a solitary island may form habits but there is no law guiding his conduct. When you say law, it means activity, conduct, regulated conduct. Therefore I say discipline, and also it should be acceptable to a large section of society.

FJB: And when you apply this to speak about the law of love?

K: Oh yes, in that way you have got to discipline yourself to that also, and there must be individuals whom you love. One can also talk of self-love. But self-love also comes in

society. You cannot imagine an individual without society. We grow in it, we live in it, we are born in it, it may be only a family but it is a society. You cannot think of an imaginary individual like Robinson Crusoe but he was also born in a society, so when you talk of the individual you talk of the social individual, even when they say freedom of the individual, it means freedom of the social individual. And freedom of the social individual must be regulated, it cannot be that he can do anything he likes.

FJB: Is the objectivity of the law in the fact that it is social, or in the fact that it is universal?

K: As social it is universal, but we have no one word yet.

FJB: I want to ask you another question. You see, Gandhi said, 'God is Truth'. And at some stage in his life he said, 'Truth is God'. What is the significance of this change? I would like to know a little bit about the significance of saying 'Truth is God', the shift from 'God is Truth'.

K: I can only tell you that there is a double kind of truth. One is comparative truth, the other is absolute truth. Absolute truth is God because it cannot be known with a limited knowledge. Am I clear? Absolute truth is what Plato describes, 'living in truth'. It is not merely telling truth but living in truth that can only be done in an absolute manner. 'Truth is God' means truth is known to God. Human beings can know only comparative truth, absolute truth is known to God, because men are not absolute. Even the judge, however hard he may try, can give only comparative truth.

FJB: And what did Gandhi feel about the relationship between absolute and relative truth?

K: Relative truth is an exercise to reach absolute truth. There you will have to go to the *Vedantic* view, or to the Christian view, original Christian view, 'Be ye as perfect as your Father in heaven'. And at that stage, you see, you are in absolute truth. Comparative truth is a training ground for absolute truth. I want to see God face to face, he was saying what Christ said 'Be ye as perfect as....'

FJB: You know you mention Christianity. When I came into Gandhi's room in Sevagram I was actually astonished that the only picture was that of Jesus Christ. What did this mean to Gandhi?

K: Gandhiji, if I may say so, was obsessed with the idea of martyrdom throughout his life.

FJB: In which sense? Yes, that is very important.

K: That if you have to do anything you must be prepared for martyrdom.

FJB: What does that mean? I think I understand but I wish you would elaborate.

K: Always he was talking of martyrdom. A friend of mine got a bullet shot. Of course, it did not injure him much. Then he says, 'I wish the shot had gone to your heart, then it would have been such a great sacrifice'. He believed in the law of that kind of sacrifice. He was always thinking in terms of martyrdom. And Christ was the greatest example for him.

FJB: Well, at some point in his life, Gandhi was in very close touch with Christianity, with Christian friends, but he didn't become a Christian ever. Can you comment on this? I mean, did he talk to you?

K: I think that whatever you find in your New Testament, apart from these, what you call miracles, is pure and simple what is taught in the *Gita*.

FJB: So eventually, I mean, Gandhi found it really in the *Gita*, but he also saw it in other religions?

K: Yes.

FJB: At some point, a Christian missionary suggested that he become a Christian. He said he did not want to become a Christian. And one reason was, he did not want to be forgiven for his sins but he wanted to be free from sins. Can you comment on that?

K: No, but why need I comment on that? This is a very Christian view of things that sins are forgiven because of the martyrdom of Christ. This is a peculiarly Christian view. Our view is that of *karma*, that is you have got to find your own salvation. The guru or the teacher can be a guide, but even for the grace of God to come down to help you, you must help yourself. Salvation does come through the grace of God, but that grace of God, how will it descend? That Hinduism says by effort, by *tapasya*.

FJB: *Tapasya*?

K: Great, you see, renunciation, discrimination and renunciation. You may say mortifying the flesh.

FJB: *Karma* is related to reincarnation. Am I right on that?

K: Yes.

FJB: That one's *karma* is given through previous reincarnation?

K: Yes, the result of the previous reincarnation. Because, of course, finally the mystery cannot be solved in words. In Hinduism, mystery can be solved by self-realization. Any theory that you make will not be logical. If you talk of *karma* as a previous birth, why did evil begin? You cannot solve that question. That question remains.

FJB: That is an unanswerable question.

K: Yes. But practically it is very scientific to think that events take place not by accident. There must be previous events which cause it. This is the scientific view of things, but beyond that Hindu philosophy does not go. You will know the ultimate truth only when you realize it, but for all practical purposes this theory of *karma*, or that your life does not stop with this existence of yours, but whatever you do you will have to enjoy or suffer either in this life or the next life. If there is no next life, then what happens is that when I am the most mature in my thought, I disappear.

FJB: That is something I often ask myself, the same observation.

K: When I am at the apex of my accomplishments, I go. That means it would have no result. This is a continuous thing. Then as the *Gita* says, I will be born in a family which is intelligent, and God fearing. I like that. And then

I will begin where I had left. If I am evil, I will begin where I had left.

FJB: I think you touched fundamental, very fundamental problems. You see I like to understand Gandhi more in context, this is why I raised these questions. This is very crucial because I want the West to see itself also in a mirror. You know you may ask why we ask this as Christians. Well, I want to really confront Christians with a way of life and problems that they are usually not acquainted with in its deeper meanings, and in that respect I wanted to ask you two questions. One, the whole experience of time in the East. I feel there is a difference in which time, the experience of time in the East, as compared to the West.

K: I don't quite follow.

FJB: When I come to New York everything is in a rush.

K: Oh, yes.

FJB: If I come to India there is a sense of an eternity in the air, in the atmosphere, and this doesn't seem to me to be accidental, it must have something to do with what you call the genius of India.

K: This genius of India is disappearing.

FJB: Why is it disappearing?

K: Because it is disappearing. We want our fish pots, you see, and fresh pots, that's all. Am I clear?

FJB: Yes, but isn't it true that, in my understanding of Gandhi, that one of his fundamental objections against

Western industrialism was because it would destroy those values? Would you feel this is true?

K: Oh, yes.

FJB: Now before, I come to this in one minute, but there is one other question that interests me very much, again in terms of East and West. When you talk to a Westerner about *atman* he will say, 'Yes, this is all right, but there is a difference, because the Indian *atman* means the ego is being dissolved. Whereas for the Westerner, the answer you know, the person remains in terms of the...'

K: Yes, yes, I understand. *Atman* is not intelligence. Your *atman* is intelligence, our *atman* goes beyond that, that is why.

FJB: Can you say more?

K: With the Westerner, when he talks of himself he talks of the mind. Mind is something material according to Hindu philosophy. Beyond mind comes the soul, which is part of the infinite and which can become infinite.

FJB: When it becomes part of the infinite, does it, in your view, retain an individual integrity? Does it dissolve in an impersonal and personal individual identity and integrity? And the becoming one, the dissolution of any personal identity, I find very challenging.

K: Now I will explain to you in this way. The West thinks that matter becomes so refined that it creates the mind. The Hindu view is that the spirit becomes so degraded that it becomes matter.

FJB: You said degraded?

K: Yes, it is the spirit that creates matter, this is the gross form of the spirit, it is not the refined form of matter that makes the mind, but it is the gross form of the spirit that makes matter. Therefore they say God is everything. There is nothing beyond Him. He has become all these things, I don't know whether this will convey to you any meaning, he has become all these things.

FJB: I am not sure what you mean you say 'He' has become all these things.

K: He has become the eternal; the spirit has become all these things. Matter does not rise to the spirit but the spirit descends to matter. Therefore, everything is full of life because it descends from there. I don't know whether you can understand it.

FJB: Yes, I do understand. Yes, this is very clear.

K: Now your science also is coming to that kind of view.

FJB: Oh yes, it is true.

K: Slowly, slowly, that there is nothing material in matter. But it is only waves and waves and one does not know the waves there but it is slowly coming to that point of view.

FJB: I understand this quite clearly. I just brought a paper referring to Gandhi where it said that modern science, as you say, is in fact completely in agreement with this world view. What I am still struggling with, and I must just put it quite frankly in that way, is the question of the personal experience that remains through realization of the self.

Let me put it this way, every Western psychologist will say self-realization—and I put it a little bit polemically but not falsely just a little bit sharply—self-realization in Europe means to become your true self as a person, and in India it means to give up your ego and become one with an impersonal reality. Is that true?

K: Yes, that is true. As long as you have got the ego you have the idea of the body. When that idea disappears, I and you disappear.

FJB: Yes, but what about the spiritual body?

K: Yes, Hinduism says attenuated ego remains. Attenuated ego remains in order for you to do your work in life.

FJB: Oh, I see, though you have attained *atman*?

K: Yes, *atman*, but yet something remains of the 'I'. 'I' does not altogether disappear as long as you are in the body.

FJB: And when you are not in body?

K: What happens when not in the body? Nobody knows, even our great *rishis* don't describe that state. It is beyond words.

FJB: That is important. I didn't realize.

K: It is beyond words, nobody has expressed it. No scripture has expressed it. As Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa used to say, 'A salt doll goes to measure the sea and when it is in the sea it disappears'. Who is there to tell anything?

FJB: But that implies that the individual is dissolved, wouldn't you say?

K: No, nobody. Even the greatest saints have said, 'No, we can't say'; it cannot be brought in words.

FJB: Well, that is important. Now I would like to shift to consider politics, economics. What about *swaraj*? What did Gandhi mean by *swaraj*?

K: Gandhi meant what was included in freedom and the constructive programme. For him, *swaraj* was not only political, but economic as well as social freedom, and the elimination of the vices from which the nation is suffering. Self-government in every sense of the term—economic, political and social.

FJB: He speaks also about *gram swaraj*, is that right?

K: *Gram swaraj* means village self-rule.

FJB: That is particularly related to the villages. Can you describe a little bit more what *swaraj* means? Is it a sort of social order?

K: As a matter of fact, the word *swaraj* was originally used for self-realization. We have used it for freedom. *Swaraj* means your control over yourself. 'Swa' means yourself, 'raj' means control, mastery over yourself. We turned *swaraj* into politics, mastery in our own country, political and social.

FJB: Gandhi was concerned with the freedom of all men, but he was also concerned with the freedom of the whole man. Does that make sense to you if I put it like that?

K: That is *swaraj*, of course, it is *swaraj*. Yes whole man, but if he had thought of the whole man he could not have

taken with himself a man like me, we are not the whole self. The emphasis was only on social, social individual.

FJB: Why do you say he couldn't have?

K: He had for himself something in his view. He wanted to see God face to face, and he wanted to see it through this process. But for us, he kept this process we were not concerned with. For a person who is concerned in India with his soul, he has got other methods.

FJB: Yes, this is important; can you say more about it?

K: I am telling you that Christ was concerned with his soul, Aurobindo Ghosh was concerned with his soul. Sri Ramkrishna, our *rishis* and *munis* were concerned with their soul. There are many things that were wrong in the world, but they did not bother about them, they thought the realization of their self would itself be a contribution to the civilization of the world. They were also concerned with the world but in an indirect way.

FJB: And you feel Gandhi was concerned in a direct way?

K: In a direct way.

FJB: What about the concern with the whole man? Would you say that because he was concerned with the whole man he was directly concerned?

K: He was concerned with himself but he did not keep that before us, otherwise he would not have had any followers. You don't mean to say that the doors of Kingdom of Heaven are so open that crowds can go in?

FJB: Well, this is important. Can you say more? Didn't he expect from everyone?

K: Even in your Bible you will find, 'straight is the way, narrow is the path', I don't exactly remember the words, you help me.

FJB: The words say this, 'The road is wide that leads to perdition, and the gate is narrow that leads to the kingdom.'

K: Not only that. 'The gate is narrow', and you will also find in the Bible, 'Many shall be called but few shall be accepted'. You remember that?

FJB: Yes, 'Few shall be chosen', that is the same. But how was that in the *satyagraha* campaign?

K: But we could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven because the gate is narrow. And it is not a society that enters into heaven. You have to go one by one.

FJB: But didn't Gandhi expect that each person...?

K: He may expect each person to be like that, but he did accept people, ordinary people, to carry on his work, to carry on what he wanted.

FJB: I could see that without any question.

K: You can understand, I will give you an example. Army is recruited from ordinary persons, villagers, peasants, and all of them are not brave, are they? No, they are timid people, ordinary people. How do they become brave? Because they come in company, they are under a discipline, they are under the guidance of a commander. Therefore, they become

so brave that they can give their life for the country and will not run away. Is that true? The *satyagrahis*, Gandhiji's followers, also came in a crowd under a leadership. Therefore they became brave, otherwise they were ordinary individuals. This was an army he was creating, but an army that happened to be non-violent. But the tactics were the same, ordinary people who came together and got strength from each other, who were disciplined under a leader who understood the whole game, but they did not understand the whole game.

FJB: And would you say it was Gandhi's direct influence that made this possible?

K: His leadership made the followers brave. Napoleon made his soldiers that way, not in any other way.

FJB: Let me ask you this question. I was puzzled when I read Rabindranath Tagore. He has an essay in which he refers to Gandhi and *khadi*. He takes issue with Gandhi. In his opinion it is important to help the development of consciousness. Is this related to what we are talking about?

K: He was quite right. But how was he to bring that consciousness? By individuals? When Tagore is talking, he is talking of individuals, consciousness can be brought in the individuals, but a diffused consciousness can be brought in a crowd. Gandhiji made the crowd brave. Did he not bring consciousness in it? But it was not a concentrated effort of making people intellectual, reasonable and all that. They came with all their faults. But he at least made them brave, made them to face the persons who were heaping all sorts of cruelties upon them. Is not that bringing in

consciousness among the people? Consciousness can be concentrated and you can make a person individually intellectual. But if you have to deal with a whole nation, of course, your consciousness will be diffused. It will be there, but it will be diffused, it cannot be as concentrated as a man who is passing his MA or BA examination. It will be diffused consciousness, but it was consciousness. Everybody who joined the movement became conscious of his rights as an individual citizen. It was not a concentrated consciousness about which the poet was talking.

FJB: And can you say a little bit more about what the quality of the consciousness was?

K: The quality of the consciousness was that whenever he took up a movement, whether it was a sectional movement of peasants in Champaran in Bihar, or in Gujarat it was the common man who got the consciousness that he is somebody, that he is in slavery, that he must resist tyranny. This consciousness was there, but it was not the consciousness of a graduate, or an MA or a PhD. What the poet is talking of is the consciousness of a PhD. Because, after all, the poet was an integrated intellectual.

FJB: But also a very deeply spiritual person.

K: Yes, deeply spiritual person, but not a political person. Gandhiji was essentially a political person.

FJB: What about the spiritual development that Gandhi touched on?

K: Because his instruments were spiritual, his politics were spiritual. There are also politicians who don't know what

spirituality is. Spirituality can be lived in society. It cannot be lived in the cave or in the mountain top. While spirituality could be lived by the ancients in the cave or in the mountain top, even today it is lived there. His spirituality was social. As a matter of fact he uses the word spirituality in a sense in which our great saints do not use it. His spirituality meant morality.

FJB: Yes, and how did the great saints...?

K: The great saints go beyond morality.

FJB: What does it mean to go beyond morality?

K: Because morality is concerned with the affairs of society. Morality is a social virtue. Beyond morality there is no evil for you, there is no good for you.

FJB: When we talked about *brahmacharya* you mentioned that you felt this was making a little bit too high demands. Actually the question I have here doesn't refer to that in particular. But when I talk to people about Gandhi's ideas, non-violence and so on, it has been said that Gandhi's non-violence makes too great demands on people. Did Gandhi ever talk to you about this, or, what are your own feelings about it?

K: You know I have already told you that there is a difference between non-violence as one of the great qualities of religious people. Gandhiji's non-violence was non-violent resistance. As such it makes no greater demands on the people than any revolutionary war in which people have to sacrifice their lives if they are to achieve anything. More than that *satyagraha* did not ask, nor as a matter of fact was

there as much bloodshed as would be in a bloody revolution. So what is the question of Gandhiji making any extraordinary demands on ordinary citizens who have to see that they are treated well, social justice is established among them, and they act as free men.

FJB: To allow oneself to be hurt is sometimes more difficult than to be aggressive. Do you see what I mean?

K: Yes, to allow to be killed. But you know that many times the revolutionaries allowed themselves to be killed, they knew there was no hope of saving themselves and yet they offered themselves as sacrifices. Even armies, when they know there is no way to escape, sacrifice themselves; and when they are outnumbered they refuse to yield, they sacrifice themselves without any hope.

FJB: Gandhi spoke a great deal on *satyagraha*, about the need for self-purification.

K: Yes, self-purification, but not of the individual. Of course he would have liked that. There must be self-purification of the individual. But he was talking in connection with the independence movement, in terms of the self-purification of the nation. It was suffering from untouchability, laziness, want of patriotism, and caste and communal differences. This was self-purification for *satyagraha*.

FJB: Wasn't it also individual?

K: It is individual and also collective. For instance, who will want untouchability? If I believe in untouchability, or give up drinking and drug habit, it is individual, and also social. You can't artificially divide the individual from society.

As I have always said, all these things have got to be done by individuals but they are also done by individuals as a group. Then you must understand the self-purification that the saint wants. He is not thinking of the nation, a purification that the saint wants is that you control your appetites, your passions, and your greed. You control all these. Controls of the individual or the salvation of the soul are a little different from the self-purification of the nation.

FJB: That makes it clear. Now, Gandhiji considered fasting an important aspect of *satyagraha*. Have you ever been with Gandhi, I mean, have you ever seen him during a fast?

K: I have seen him fasting.

FJB: Can you describe a little bit what happened?

K: What happens? What would happen in any fast? He will go on losing weight and all that. But what is your question? You want me to say what happens to him physically?

FJB: Well, when he fasted, that had a very great influence.

K: Yes, it focuses attention of the whole nation.

FJB: How did it happen?

K: Because he was the leader of the nation. It cannot happen in the case of ordinary individuals, but it must happen in the case of any important individual and the people begin to ask why he is fasting, and what he wants. They are thrown upon themselves, and they begin to question. It has also an effect upon neutrals who have nothing to do with the fight and want to remain neutral. They are also energized, they also become active, and they also begin to

bring pressure upon those against whom the fast has been undertaken. For instance, he fasted for the untouchables not to be divided from Hindu society and they must have their rights in the Hindu society. Then there were people who were even indifferent. But then they became alert, and they began to think, they fell upon themselves, what were they doing in their lives, what were their own actions? There will be two types of people, the reformers and the opponents. But there are a great number of people who are neither reformers nor opponents. They are not concerned, will not concern themselves with the questions. They begin to take stock of the situation and they begin to ask themselves whether they should not also help the reform movement. So if the opponent is sensitive, it has also an influence upon the opposition. You remember what the Bible says, 'There can be no greater love than this, that one gives his life for one's friends.'

FJB: How is it that he could touch his opponents? What is it in that he must have touched something very deep? Or is that not so, that the opponents were touched?

K: Opponent also feels that this person is in dead earnest so much that he is willing voluntarily to give his life for the cause. In a foreign government there would be die-hards, may be in the bureaucracy, or in the government. But the government is also part of the nation. The nation's attention will also be drawn to the fact that here is a man who is going to sacrifice himself for a cause. They will then begin to think. Gandhiji had many admirers and supporters among the English people. This does not happen in a

violent fight. In a violent fight, one nation comes opposite to the other nation.

FJB: I want to ask you another question about fasting. Sometimes people say that the fasting was coercive. Do you see what I mean?

K: You cannot avoid some kind of coerciveness. Element of coercion also comes, but it is a question of the intention of the person who fasts. Whatever you do against injustice and tyranny will have an element of coercion you cannot avoid. But is it your intention to coerce people or is it your intention to convert people? That will depend upon the whole life of the individual. It is not a question of one action. Does his whole life proclaim that he is a man who wants to coerce people, and he wants to oblige people to do things and, therefore, he wants to create some sympathy for himself by fasting? But the coercion will be there, you can't avoid it, whether it is intended or not. Coercion means pressure. Of course, pressure will be there, otherwise fasting has no meaning.

FJB: I understand.

K: Pressure is different from coercion.

FJB: Do you feel that Gandhi was really an ascetic person?

K: I don't think he was ascetic in any real sense of the term. Of course, we have grown to require many comforts for ourselves. He did not want all those comforts. But not hankering after bodily comforts and living a plain life is not asceticism. He was not a mortifying individual. He did not mortify the flesh. He, as a matter of fact, took his food and

enjoyed it. Whatever experiments he was making of it, he had good appetite. He protected himself from cold, heat and so on. All these things he did. He was not an ascetic who wanted to mortify the flesh. Asceticism means mortification of the flesh. If it means a simple life, of course, his life was simple. High thinking and simple living. In an age where enjoyment is considered the end of life people might call him ascetic, but in the real sense of the word, mortifying the flesh, he did not do it.

FJB: Somebody said that he was more concerned about self-control than self-realization.

K: But the two things can't be separated from each other. Self realization can only come from self-control. Between the two there is no contradiction, and I think if a person was self-controlled, self-realization will automatically come. If a man wanted self-realization then he will have to control his conduct, he will have to be disciplined.

FJB: Now I want to ask you a few questions about Gandhi and women. It has been said that Gandhi took an attitude towards women very different from the traditional one. Did he ever talk to you about his attitude towards women?

K: What is the meaning of traditional in India? It has a different meaning than perhaps in other countries. Traditional may be the immediate past, or the distant past. In the distant past, our women were free. They did not wear any veil and they took part in political affairs and philosophical discourses. If that is tradition, then, of course, his attitude was traditional. Traditional in the immediate past related to foreign rule of the Muslims.

The *purdah* system came with the Muslims. We Hindus never had any *purdah*. You can see the *Mahabharata* women, and the women in *Ramayana*. There are so many instances of women participating with men in all activities, except in war. But also there are traditions in Rajasthan where, when men were defeated, women took up arms.

FJB: When you say distant past how distant is it? What was the period when women were free?

K: I should say before the Islamic invasion of India.

FJB: Gandhi said that a woman can be more non-violent than a man.

K: That was his view; I can't say anything about it.

FJB: But is that right, that that was his view? Because it is not clear from his writing.

K: Because she has got to sacrifice herself for the family, for the children, if the child is ill she has to keep a night vigil. So she has to suffer the pains of childbirth, so she is more capable of suffering pain than the man. After all she is the mother of mankind and motherly qualities mean that one is more soft, more loving.

FJB: But for *satyagraha* one needs a combination of qualities—a great deal of courage and strength too. Wouldn't you say this is so?

K: I didn't follow.

FJB: I mean, you spoke about a woman as more loving and more kind. But for *satyagraha* one needs a whole

combination of qualities—a great deal of courage, strength and all. You feel a woman has more of those than a man?

K: He felt, I can't say.

FJB: This is a somewhat different question. Some people said that Gandhi himself combined in himself the masculine and the feminine in a new way.

K: That is true. He had the female qualities, he could be a very good nurse, and of course as a lover of humanity you can understand he had the feelings of a father or a mother towards all humanity, so if these are female qualities, then, of course.

FJB: Well, what do you really feel were the female qualities in Gandhi?

K: First of all, non-violence, love, and then taking care of the sick and the needy. These are the qualities usually associated with women. But unfortunately, I know women can be more cruel than men.

FJB: In which way?

K: Historically, I have seen cruel women when they have come to power.

FJB: In India?

K: In India, I don't know. Also there is one example in Kashmir of a queen who was very cruel, and in Russia there was an example of what they call, Margaret or somebody?

FJB: I would like to ask you a few questions about caste. Did you ever talk to Gandhi about the question of caste and his own attitude towards it?

K: He was against caste. He said originally caste did not mean superiority and inferiority. Caste was according to the work men did—the work of fighting, of maintaining the community, of service, and of a philosopher or thinker. So he said these are very natural divisions and originally the caste system was meant for that. There was no question of high and low. Everybody, every labourer was worthy of his hire. So every worker performed some social duties. So long as he did that, there is no question of high and low. But as it has grown, Gandhiji was against this system.

FJB: And he was against all the caste rules?

K: Oh, yes.

FJB: Gandhi said, at one point, that if he had to be reborn he would choose to be a Harijan. Could you comment on that?

K: I can't comment on that. In that way, you see, he identified with the lowest and he thought that the higher caste had done so much evil to the lower caste and it would be a kind of penance if he was born in the lowest caste.

FJB: How important do you feel the idea of reincarnation was in Gandhi's life?

K: We are born with that. A Hindu is born with that idea. There is no question of that, he doesn't reason about it. There is no logical explanation.

FJB: And for Gandhi this was very important?

K: Oh, yes.

FJB: But how do you feel it affected him? Is it difficult to say how it affected him?

K: As I told you earlier, we disappear whenever the intellectual qualities are the highest and then there is no result, end, finish. Many evil people go throughout the world scot-free, they enjoy life, they have reputation, they are also respected by people, and they die, and their evil will have no effect at all, that one cannot understand. And there have been cases in India where people remembered their last birth. Even in ordinary sickness you forget what happened in the past and here is a transformation, so it is natural to forget, but that forgetfulness does not take away the continuity of life. I do not know what the Christians mean by the soul being eternal. Have they explained that? I have seen no explanation of that argument. Where does the soul go after death? They have not answered that question.

FJB: And according to Hindu belief?

K: Either it merges itself into the greater whole, or it is re-born according to the actions that it has done in the past.

FJB: Merging itself in the greater self, what does that mean? I mean by 'merging'?

K: Well, as I have told you earlier one doesn't know what that means. Nobody has described that; it cannot be described in words.

FJB: But do you personally believe that you will, in the greater whole, preserve your own identity.

K: I don't know. Identity depends upon memory. If there is no memory there is no identity, the memory is lost.

Suppose a person loses his memory on account of some accident. Then they are two different persons, but the person is the same. So this is a great catastrophe or whatever you may call it, it is a great transformation, it obliterates memory. That is nothing unusual.

FJB: I would now like to ask you some questions about society, and the social order. We talked about many things and I want to know how are the things we have talked about so far related to Gandhi's ideas on society and the social order.

K: He did believe that a social order could be made more just, more equitable. Whether he believed it could be absolutely so, is not very clear. But in the history of mankind there have been occasions when there is a great rising of the spirit, when people, in general, become more refined, more non-violent, more truthful. There are other periods where cruelty, injustice, and exploitation have an upper hand. So my own idea is that Gandhiji, like Christ, wanted more human conduct, more truthful conduct, and more non-violent conduct. Whether he thought that the reform that he wanted to bring about in society would eternally last I cannot say. But I know that there are periods when the spirit rises, this is so even in the case of literature. There are periods when you find literary persons springing up all of a sudden. Then you find there is some kind of an exhaustion. And you do not produce Shakespeare every time. The process goes on, but he believed that ultimately society is rising from lower stage to a higher stage, and he believed that through non-violence and truth, a society will be in a

higher stage. Whether it will remain there or not is another question which he did not answer. He did not perhaps ask this himself.

FJB: How was Gandhi's idea of society? How was it related to the whole idea of the *varnas*, the *varnadharma*?

K: *Varnadharma* means caste. I have told you already what he thought of caste.

FJB: Yes, and *varnas*, that is not necessarily caste.

K: *Varna* originally means colour. I don't know how this word came to be transformed into a caste because there are all sorts of colours in all castes. I don't know how this word came to be.

FJB: But originally it simply meant colour?

K: It had nothing to do with colour, because at least the higher castes are of the same colour.

FJB: Could you describe a little bit the kind of society which Gandhi visualized and worked for?

K: I told you that he wanted a more just, equitable society, where there was no exploitation of man by man, and that could only be brought about through non-violence and truth.

FJB: What about competition?

K: Cannot there be competition among good people to be better than each other? There is competition in games, in knowledge; all these are peaceful ways of competition. Competition does not always imply violence. There are peaceful ways of competition.

FJB: Would Gandhi be in favour of these kinds of competition?

K: Of course.

FJB: What about cooperation?

K: Cooperation is not inconsistent with competition. Supposing I am more intelligent than the other man, we can cooperate. I can see he also gains something of my intelligence. Do not the teacher and the pupil cooperate with each other? One has more knowledge and the other has less knowledge, there is competition, and there is cooperation. If you take it from the point of view of competition, the teacher is more informed and more intelligent, more experienced, but there is also cooperation between the teacher and the pupil.

FJB: What was Gandhi's idea on the market mechanism on these things, to organize the society? Would it be determined by market relationships? Did he ever talk about this?

K: Fundamentally he thought that all work originates from certain wants of the social individual. Doctor, lawyer, administrator, merchant, labourer, they all fulfill certain wants in society, and therefore they are all equal. That was the idea of Gandhiji. You remember that book, *Unto this Last*? There everybody does his work, no work is low or high. All work is for the society being kept together, that was Gandhiji's idea.

FJB: Gandhi often spoke about health and illness in relation to society, could you comment on this?

K: Illness in relation to society? I don't remember illness. He thought an unbalanced, non-cooperative, exploiting, cruel society will be considered undesirable. I don't know what your question implied.

FJB: How did he refer to health? You know he talked about a healthy society.

K: A healthy society is that which is peaceful and non-violent. More non-violent, more peaceful, and more honest society.

FJB: He talked about village as a circle and then circles around, so the whole society is an integral...

K: Oh, yes. It is more possible for an individual who is living in a village to take up village work. And he said that democracy is best, and prospers best, in small circles. As the circle gets bigger, democracy loses some of its points. In a small circle, people can and do meet together. He was not against the big circles also, but he said that the greatest democracy can live only in the village, village that is self-supporting for the primary requirements of life. Every village should be self-supporting. In India there were self-supporting villages. That did not mean there was no commerce. Whatever they produced more than they needed, went to the cities and throughout the world. Otherwise, as for the essentials of life they were self-supporting, and this self-support also is by stages. For instance, they should be self-supporting in cloth, food, and primary needs of life. They can't be self-supporting in iron, in electricity, and so on. Then, of course, there is a bigger whole. But in the bigger whole, democracy gets a little diluted

because there would be bureaucracy. You can't have direct rule in a village. You choose your representative. You can see what your representatives are doing. In higher circles most of the time you do not know what is happening. The villager at least does not know, and many times the bureaucracy rules. The bureaucratic rule always has an element of injustice in it.

FJB: Gandhi emphasized very much a constructive programme. In which way is this reflected in his ideas of society?

K: Every item of a constructive programme was meant to reform the society.

FJB: In which way? Can you give some examples?

K: For instance, communal unity. Is it not desirable that in a nation the communities should live at peace with each other? Take drinking and drug habit. Is it not desirable that people should not drink, and should not use drugs? Or take untouchability. Is it not desirable that they should consider every human being as equal to himself? 'Do unto others as you want to be done by', is the golden rule to apply in human conduct. So everything, he wanted—a national language—we cannot eternally go on with a foreign language. New generations will be born, we will disappear and they will want something of their own which is more natural, and embedded in the soil. So every item of his had certain things which the nation needs, must cultivate, and which has so far been neglected. He believed that it is not the cussedness of the British that has brought about tyranny of foreign rule, but it is our

national defects of which they took advantage. He said, as soon as those national defects are gone there will be no need for *satyagraha*, or non-violent fight. That British rule depends upon our insufficiencies, our defects, and our national defects. As soon as those defects disappear, a reformed India will be a free India; that was his motto. It was also seen that the foreign government has been deliberately dividing us, lowering our morals, giving us certain institutions which are foreign to our genius. The upper classes in India have never drunk, but when the British came, this habit of drinking developed in these upper classes.

FJB: That wasn't there before?

K: Never. A *brahmin* or a *baniya* would never think of drinking, and people never kept drinks in their homes, and they never offered it to guests.

FJB: So this came through the British?

K: The Britishers wanted to introduce the policy of divide and rule. The Hindus and the Muslims had been living together for centuries; there were quarrels but not such bitter quarrels as were brought about by the British deliberately in order to rule.

FJB: Did Gandhi ever talk about a good or ideal society, or did he not use such expressions?

K: Of course he did use 'an ideal society'. But sometimes he said that the ideal should be the actual, and sometimes he said the ideal should remain the ideal, we can only approach it. The nearer we approach it the better.

FJB: What was the importance of *khadi* in Gandhi's ideas?

K: He saw that the country was suffering from poverty and unemployment, and *khadi* will give them employment and to that extent it will diminish their expenditure on cloth. That will be one item in the elimination of poverty. It can't be everything. Then they will have to do other things but this was a very natural thing. In India there was a tradition of spinning in every home, and he wanted to revive that. He wanted spinning to be a part time job when people have nothing else to do. He wanted to utilize the rest of the country and turn it into wealth. Supposing a man has spun some 500 yards of thread on the spinning wheel. He was, to that extent, adding to the wealth of the country. Gandhiji did not want people who have more remunerative jobs to go and ply the *charkha*. He wanted those who have spare time to spend, to ply the *charkha*. The cultivator in India in those days, and even in these days, is free at least for three months in the year. He has nothing to do during this period.

FJB: How was the *charkha* very important for Gandhi?

K: That was the only way he could do it.

FJB: But wouldn't you say that the *charkha* also had a good deal of symbolic significance?

K: It had symbolic significance because it had real significance. If it did not have real significance it won't be a symbol even. Every symbol must have some reality behind it. Otherwise the symbol will have no meaning.

FJB: What about Gandhi's idea of trusteeship? Did he ever talk to you about it?

K: I do not know why people don't understand the idea of trusteeship. What is this government that is ruling over us? Is it not a trustee? Whether it rules well or ill, it is a trustee. Can we do without government?

FJB: No, but in the economic sphere?

K: In the economic field, in every field, do we not appoint trustees? When the trustees may prove to be dishonest, then what happens? The Supreme Court regulates. This man has not discharged his trust properly, therefore they appoint another trustee. Isn't that so? Here he could not liquidate the capitalists, because it was foreign rule and he did not have the power. He wanted these people to act as trustees. 'But', you will say, 'if they did not discharge the duties?' He would employ, as he would employ against the government, the weapon of non-cooperation. Supposing a mill-owner doesn't [perform his duties], then he would say that there should be a strike, they should not cooperate with him.

FJB: You say he couldn't do away with the capitalists. Did he want to?

K: He couldn't have done away with them. We were under a foreign government, how could he have done away with the capitalists? I can understand, if you have power you say you nationalize everything. Even when you nationalize, the government becomes the trustee. Supposing it goes wrong, what do you do? Supposing nationalized industries are not properly run, what do you do? You can never escape from the idea of trusteeship. Even if you elect your own representatives for the time that they are carrying out your work,

they are trustees. You have entrusted them with some work, but you periodically can dispense with them in democracy.

FJB: Yes, but with capitalists you cannot just dispense with them.

K: Maybe you cannot dispense with, Gandhiji could not dispense with, but when you are a free country you can dispense with them.

FJB: Did he want to dispense with them?

K: Of course, he wanted to dispense with them, but because he could not dispense with them, he said that the trustees have also to be dispensed with if they do not discharge the trust. If he found any trustee not discharging the trust he would have advised those who were working under him to offer *satyagraha*. What do the labourers do? They offer *satyagraha*, but they have hatred in their mind, Gandhiji did not believe in that hatred. Otherwise, of course, in the economic field what do the labourers do? They don't take up cudgels, they simply non-cooperate. What is the meaning of non-cooperation? The meaning of non-cooperation is *satyagraha*. Minus the hatred, it is the same thing. You cannot escape from trusteeship. You will have to entrust the task of managing things to some people, and though some people may prove to be dishonest, then in an organized society you have the government to deal with them, but where there is freedom, say in trade, what do the people do? They non-cooperate.

FJB: Yes, I understand that there is a great deal of difference between a trustee who can be recalled, like an elected representative, and a capitalist.

K: He cannot be recalled, but he can be brought to his senses by non-cooperation.

FJB: But you feel in a free India Gandhi would not have wanted the capitalists?

K: You cannot avoid capitalism. It is impossible. Either the state becomes capitalist, or you have individual capitalists. How can there be production unless you have saved something? What you have saved is your capital. The question is, are you going to have individual capitalists, or the state as capitalist? In communist society, the state is the capitalist. And it is more difficult to act against that state than it would be against a private capitalist. He said that the capitalists should get their riches in accordance with the life that is being lived by the peasants, by the workers.

FJB: But you see, the fact that you need capital doesn't necessarily mean you need capitalists.

K: But is not the state the capitalist? It owns the capital. That state is the best which governs the least.

FJB: That was his idea?

K: Yes. And if you give economic life also in the hands of the state, then the state becomes totalitarian. You have to make your selection.

FJB: Can you say something about Gandhi's idea on technology?

K: Technology is nothing new. Humanity has always used technology. The wheel that drew water or the carriage that was driven by horse or by bullock, they were also the result

of technology. Now it has become more complicated, that is all. What is the difference?

FJB: Gandhi often spoke against machinery.

K: And he himself said that our whole body is a very delicate and complicated machinery. He said, 'how can I be against machinery? But I do not want the hands of man to be atrophic and the machine to work for them. When people are starving I don't want to introduce machinery so that they might starve.' The first thing is man, man can be master of machines and not the slave of the machine. Then he had no objection because, he said, 'take for instance the sewing machines, they take away the toil of the [women]'.

FJB: What is the essence of science?

K: To gain knowledge by experiment. Gandhiji calls his life as experiments with truth. And he was all the time experimenting. Essentially he was scientific, he didn't take things for granted. He said that everything that is against human reason should be discarded. So if that is the essence of science, this man was very scientific. But his science was social science and not physical science.

FJB: If Gandhi would have lived long enough to really develop the kind of social order in India which would have completely expressed his ideas, what would he have done?

K: He would have carried on the constructive programme with the help of the government. He would have seen that there is communal unity; there is no untouchability; everybody was provided with work. He would have done all these things. What he had introduced, he did it in a

pioneer fashion when he had no power. When ministries were formed he asked them to carry out the constructive programme. These were his instructions, 'a prize of 100,000 rupees for a person who would invent the wheel which will give four times the yarn than the ordinary wheel gives'. But it was all decentralized industry, not centralized, because it gave the greatest amount of labour to the people who were unemployed, and those who were even partially employed. *Charkha* is a very easy thing to work on. It will give them some subsidiary income. I don't see what economic laws are violated by putting your waste and turning it into wealth.

FJB: No, there is no law violated.

K: And economics merely complicate matters. But the simple thing is that when people are unemployed—and there are plenty of them—then they must have some work. But now-a-days it is even easier than during the days of Gandhiji. Do you know that all big machines have now standardized parts? If your motor car goes out of order you don't change the whole motor car, you only change a part, and it may be any make of motor but the parts are the same. If parts are the same, these can be made in the village homes and then assembled in the factory. Also, parts can be made in different sections of the factory and assembled in one section. Instead of being in the same building, supposing they are manufactured in the village homes. The parts are manufactured, you give them electricity, a lathe and materials. And they will produce. And you can go and take them and assemble them and even make big machines. Japan is doing that. Japanese capitalist doesn't want

to have everything done in the factory. He provides the lathe and some capital to the villager. In his compounded lathe screws are made, some mudguards are made, somewhere else something is made, and then he assembles them together. There is no question of strikes even there. He finds it a cheaper thing to do, so this can be done.

FJB: To what extent do you feel that Gandhi's ideas on economy and society are related to the conditions at his time and to what extent would they apply today?

K: Today they will apply as I have told you. You give a little machine to the people and it will produce parts of big machines. After all a motor car or a steam engine doesn't come ready-made in one section of the factory. Different parts are made in different sections. But supposing those parts were made in village homes, what is the difference?

FJB: Now take the idea of trusteeship. To what extent, in which way, would it apply to the present situation?

K: Trusteeship is a question apart, and I have explained to you how trusteeship works.

FJB: But do you feel it is relevant today, as relevant as it was at Gandhi's time?

K: I really don't understand your difficulty. How is the labourer functioning? The capitalist doesn't play the game. What does he do? He does not discharge his trust properly by giving fair wages and facilities which are needed even for working. Then what does a labourer do? He either goes to the government or he non-cooperates.

FJB: Yes, I understand. You said that Gandhi couldn't do anything about the capitalists because it was a foreign rule.

K: Otherwise he would have made laws.

FJB: But now one can.

K: One can. One should. After all in England, and in America, women workers are given maternity leave, old age pensions, sickness leave, and so many other facilities that were not thought of before. And how did these facilities come to be given? Because labourers went on non-cooperating. If the present-day capitalist has to make some profit, he will have to give all these advantages. In all civilized countries these advantages are given which were never imagined of before. Why? Due to extension of democracy and Non-cooperation Movement, which is called strikes in the West. What is your difficulty in this?

FJB: My difficulty is that, if being a capitalist is not the right thing because it gives you power over other people, why should there be capitalists?

K: But how will you produce things without capital?

FJB: Not without capital, but without capitalists.

K: I told you, either you have individual capitalists or you have the capitalist state. And the state governs. Bureaucracy becomes the dominant factor. It can manipulate things for its own advantage. A state also works through men. Suppose those men don't play the game? They become bureaucrats, they have advantages for themselves, and they have perquisites which are not available to the labourers. How

can you prevent these? If the cultivator does not keep aside a portion of his grain for seed, how can he produce?

FJB: What about work? It is often said that Gandhi had quite a different attitude towards work than was traditional in India.

K: In every country a gentleman doesn't do any physical work, an educated person doesn't do any physical work. He said that everybody should do some physical work to identify himself with the masses.

FJB: Was Gandhi concerned with the meaning of work?

K: He meant even the intellectuals must do physical work, to identify themselves with those who are doing merely physical work. And, he also said that this physical work is also for their physical health.

FJB: Yes, but in the West, we don't give much attention to whether there is joy in work or rhythm in work. We just say that this is a day's work, a job is a job. What was Gandhi's attitude?

K: Gandhiji thought in terms of an integrated society. Where physical work was to be left to certain lower strata of society; you only go on with your philosophy and with your books. You also must do something to identify yourself with the physical workers. That was his idea. You may agree with it or not, but what is wrong about it?

FJB: No, nothing wrong. I read some of the things he wrote about technology and machines. He writes that it is important that work gives some joy and some meaning for

the people, and I wonder whether you could comment on that aspect of work.

K: I told you that he thought that some physical work was necessary even for the body. Then he saw it as identification with the workers.

FJB: I would like to go to politics. What is Gandhi's most important contribution in the field of politics?

K: Fundamentally, what is the meaning of democracy? Democracy functions on account of certain moral values. And if you analyse it they come to be non-violence and truth. Suppose we have a democracy. There is impersonation during elections, there is intimidation, bribery, corruption. Will those elections be democratic? No. So what is the fundamental idea of democracy? That all citizens are equal, they have equal rights, they exercise their rights periodically, and for the exercise of those rights certain rules and regulations are made. If I go and bribe a voter to vote for me that is considered illegal, but it is also immoral. So the greatest contribution Gandhiji made to democracy was this emphasis on truth and non-violence which is given in every constitution in the world, every democratic constitution. Only they translate it into political terms. They say there should be no impersonation; Gandhiji said there should be no dishonesty. He used moral words while the politician used political and legal terms. The bases of democracy are moral values, justice, equality, honesty; otherwise democracy won't work. Why do we condemn this Watergate thing? Because of dishonesty, violence, and untruth. When we finished our labours in the Constituent Assembly—I was the President of the Congress—the last word that

I spoke was that we have given you certain moral principles translated in legal and political terms.

FJB: This is very important. Gandhi said at one point that politics divorced from religion has absolutely no meaning.

K: But you must understand that by religion Gandhiji means morals. He did not mean religion concerned with the ceremonies, or with the other paraphernalia which religion has used. By religion he did not mean going into *samadhi*, going into the higher regions, closing your eyes, counting beads, keeping fast, and so on. He said religion cannot be lived in a cave or in a mountain top; it must be lived in society. How do you live it in society? That means moral conduct. So Gandhiji did not use technical terms, he used the current terms, so he calls morality as religion, his religion was morality, and two chief principles of that religion were truth and non-violence, the rest will follow.

FJB: Politics is very close to you, isn't it?

K: Yes, yes.

FJB: How did Gandhi's ideas relate to those of Gokhale?

K: I do not know. I do not understand, because Gokhale's politics were different. Gandhiji had nothing to do with Gokhale's politics.

FJB: Nothing to do with his politics?

K: Nothing. There is no connection, but he called him his guru as you call a teacher in primary school your teacher. Gokhale was a great patriot, but his ideas were not the same as those of Gandhiji. He appreciated Gandhiji but he could not follow him.

FJB: But in which way were Gokhale's ideas different from Gandhi?

K: He would not have non-cooperation with the British Government. He believed that slowly we will get our freedom. And in the meantime Gandhiji said, 'The nation is going down, if I don't act today, you see, there is no possibility of action left. There will be no life left in the nation.' And Gokhale did not believe in the capacity of the people. Gandhi had infinite trust in the people. Gokhale thought our people are ignorant; how can they do, what can they do? And Gokhale thought in terms of constitutional agitation. But constitutional agitation can work only in a society where there is already democracy working. Constitutional agitation means that you can displace your government, you pass a vote against the government, when the government is dismissed you get another government. You cannot remove the executive by a vote that you might pass. This was tried in the Central Assembly. We had majority in the Central Assembly. We threw out the budget, but nothing happened. The Viceroy sanctioned it and it went. So constitutional agitation means that there must be democratic constitution. But we had no democratic constitution. Then how could there be constitutional agitation? Gokhale stood for constitutional agitation—have meetings, have demonstrations.

FJB: I understand that the idea of *dharma*, Gandhi's ideas of the meaning of *dharma*, was different from what it was usually considered to be.

K: *Dharma* means morality. His two basic principles were truth and non-violence, for him that was it.

FJB: So you would say *dharma* for him was expressed in truth and non-violence?

K: Oh yes. *Dharma* was not outside society, because *dharma* has many meanings. For an Indian monk, what would be *dharma*? Sitting still and have your gaze on the tip of your nose and think of God. And that will ensure your salvation. Or perform ceremonies. Keep *namaz* and *roza*, that the Muslims do. That kind of prayer and that kind of fasting, and give something in charity, that is *dharma*. Go to the temple, go to the mosque. Gandhiji never went to any temple or mosque. His *dharma* was to be lived in society. There could be no *dharma* outside society.

FJB: And what does it mean to speak about *swadharma*?

K: *Swadharma* means one's own duties.

FJB: How do you know what your own duties are?

K: Oh, you have undertaken a job and you don't know what your duties are?

FJB: Is it the person who decides it?

K: No, whatever duties you have chosen for yourself, if they are not such as would injure another person, then you do your duty, that's all. And don't care for the results, because results are not in your hands.

FJB: Can I choose my own profession, my own work? Is this my *swadharma*?

K: Yes. Provided it does no injury to others.

FJB: Yes, but traditionally in Indian society I have to follow my father's.

K: Oh no, not at all.

FJB: Not in the caste system?

K: No, no, even because of the caste system nobody follows his father; otherwise all the *brahmins* will be doing *puja* ceremonies. *Brahmins* are in the government service. Even before the Britishers came some of them had shoemaker shops. The *kshatriyas*, the fighting caste, are in the government, are everywhere.

FJB: You mean, at no time, did the son have to follow the father's.....

K: At no time, there may be in very ancient times but no more.

FJB: The *brahmins* are the highest caste. What about the people who worked in handicraft and such things?

K: Yes, it is very natural for them, because they are apprentices from their very childhood. But nobody prevents them from taking up any other profession.

FJB: In other words they would have been free to do it, if they had wanted?

K: They are free to do it, they were always free to do it, but only a few did it. That's all.

FJB: I want to ask you a few questions about India after Gandhi. What could you tell me about the Gandhian movement after Gandhi's death? What really happened?

K: I told you that we wanted to copy the West and become an industrialized nation in the terms of industrial revolution and have big factories. We wanted to be as powerful and as opulent as the Western countries are.

FJB: Yes, but what about the Gandhians themselves?

K: It was forgotten.

FJB: But how was that possible since people in the government were so close to Gandhi?

K: They were not so close to Gandhi. If you read the life of Jawaharlal, he always disagreed with Gandhiji, he called plying the *charkha* old maid's work, he called removal of untouchability as a social reform. At every turn he disagreed with Gandhiji. He only agreed with him on this that the British government should go. For the rest he was a European, a Westerner.

FJB: Do you feel the Gandhians today have a real alternative to the present society?

K: Now they have no alternatives. I am afraid they lost the opportunity.

FJB: How did that happen?

K: They followed the government. That means they did not resist the measures that the Government was adopting, they did not go to the Parliament. They did not organize themselves into a political party.

FJB: You felt they should have organized themselves into a political party?

K: Yes, yes. I always told them to do it. They wouldn't do it.

FJB: And what did they tell you, why wouldn't they follow your advice?

K: Because they said politics is a dirty game, that is all. Gandhiji didn't say politics is a dirty game. They were not equal to the task.

FJB: That's very strange, isn't it?

K: It is, very strange. It is very sad also.

FJB: But were there other people besides you who urged them to be active in the political realm?

K: Their idea was that they are going to the people and they are going to strengthen the people. They have not been able to strengthen the people. The people will also get strong through struggles. I will give you a concrete example. I have an establishment for producing hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. I began it in 1920.

FJB: You yourself?

K: Yes, myself, with the students who had participated in the Non-cooperation Movement in Benares Hindu University. Some students came along with me non-cooperating, and left all their studies. We established an institution which has been helping in the manufacture of *khadi*, *charkha*, and so on. Now we have come to have a production of about 40 million rupees and we have a loan from the government. The government gives loans because it wants to make itself respectable. We did all this work by

starving ourselves. But the new people who come say, 'give us also the salary that is being given by the government'. How can I give salary that is being given by the government? So my work becomes impossible, so I have left that institution. Government can so work that it can destroy every constructive work that you do. Supposing there is a Hindu-Muslim unity, the government wants the Muslim votes for itself. Then it divides and rules just like the British government did. They are doing that today.

FJB: In which way do they do that today?

K: They create riots, they give them undue advantages, they frighten them also that you are a minority, unless you support the government, the Hindus will eat you up. They do all that kind of things.

FJB: I am not yet quite clear why you left that institution.

K: Because their labour laws are such that those cannot be applied to a charitable and philanthropic institution, whose organizers have been sacrificing their life to build up this work. It is not a commercial organization; it is registered as a charitable institution. To apply labour laws there, a communist enters there and creates trouble because he doesn't believe in that and he organizes a strike or a *gherao*. Then the work cannot go on. I told him that the government is taking over what are called sick textile mills. If a textile mill does not work properly then they take over. I said, 'you take over this work and conduct it yourself. If you don't take over this work you must release me from the absurd laws that you apply to factories which are working for profit. This is not working for profit, this is meant for

giving livelihood to the poor, to the unemployed.' They did neither. And I say, 'I am not responsible for your money and I leave.' I have been working there now for more than fifty years and in that time I built up this institution because they wouldn't play the game with me then. I can't hold myself responsible for so much money that they have given as a loan.

FJB: Let me ask you another question. How deeply did Gandhi penetrate into the consciousness of the people of India?

K: That is a very difficult question to answer. So far as Independence is concerned he did. So far as constructive work is concerned, he did pioneer work. But beyond that he penetrated into the consciousness of people. They had no idea of fighting the British government. They were quite satisfied with their slavery. He loved the nation, he made them brave, he made them defy authority if the authority was unreasonable. He took away the fear of the foreigner from the people. I told you earlier that in Champaran in Bihar, when he stood up before the court he said, 'You convict me, I am not going to leave this place.' That was an eye-opener to them. Here is a man who can go to jail for us. What are we doing? They also became brave.

FJB: But in terms of the whole social order, did he penetrate into the consciousness with his ideas of a new society?

K: Take the case of untouchability. He was able to do so much work in that direction that nobody can get up and say that he believes in untouchability. It has become disrespected to believe in untouchability. In the villages some

people may observe it, but nobody would dare to say that he believes in untouchability.

FJB: To what extent did he penetrate in terms of non-violence?

K: I am afraid non-violence has not penetrated into our society, because it has become like every other society where wealth and position count. How can that be non-violent?

FJB: What do you feel is the reason?

K: Acquisitive society. It has again become an acquisitive society, where position, power, wealth, and so on count.

FJB: And how do you account for that? How can you explain that?

K: I can't explain this.

FJB: It just happened?

K: How can you, how can you explain the Christian world's deviation from the teachings of Christ, can you?

FJB: Well, I think you could.

K: The teachings of Christ are quite plain, no commentary is required. From age to age there have been reformers. But this society turns out to be the acquisitive society. Take Marx. Do you mean to say they are following Marx? How will they fight Russia and China? How would Russia subordinate these Eastern countries? Are these Marxian ideas? They talk of Marx, these people also talk of Gandhi, but they do the contrary things.

FJB: And when you say 'these people', whom do you mean?

K: I mean those who are in charge of the government.

FJB: They do in fact talk as if they were talking about Gandhi. Do they talk about Gandhi at all?

K: They all talk about Gandhi. As the Bolsheviks, the Communists swear by Lenin and Marx. How would they be divided, how can they subordinate other countries? That is imperialism.

FJB: But you know Gandhi. You talk about Champaran.

K: About what? Self-reliance?

FJB: About the work. Gandhi in his autobiography at several points says how difficult it was to get people to do constructive work.

K: Yes.

FJB: It started already in his work in Champaran.

K: Yes.

FJB: Then later in Bombay he makes the same comment.

K: Yes. He said several times. He also left the Congress on that account.

FJB: Why?

K: Because they were more interested in driving away the British than in the constructive work. After all, constructive work means labour, which means you have to live in a village. You have to leave aside all your ambitions of wealth

and power. It is easy to fight, but if constructive work is to be done it requires labour. Fighting doesn't require labour.

FJB: What about education? That goes with constructive work, doesn't it?

K: Yes. He devised for us the most scientific system of education. And yet we go on with the old system. In that system he combined intellectual and physical work. Also education should be self-supporting. That is what the children think should have value, should be able to find a market or should be used in their own homes. Education, work, wages, all are combined. Give a little plot of land to the children, show them how to cultivate it, and they get their vegetables from it. And that way because they do hand work, because they do some constructive work, their education is also more real than before; it is not only book learning.

FJB: Here is a statement about Sevagram which says 'almost everything that was achieved in the village in Gandhi's time in the social and economic fields, is lost already in less than a decade after his death'. Is that true?

K: Yes. It is true so far as I am concerned.

FJB: But can you explain it to me?

K: Who says it?

FJB: This is from a book titled *Blossoms in the Dust*.

K: Whose book is it?

FJB: Kusum Nair. I think it is true for Sevagram, is it true for India?

K: In Sevagram they keep something. She is talking of Sevagram? Sevagram is not quite correct, but so far as India is concerned it is quite correct.

FJB: Can you explain this to me a little bit? It is astonishing to me that this is possible.

K: Why should it be astonishing to you? You know what became of Christianity. Read the history of Christianity. You will not be surprised. All people became Christians but there were some sects living quietly, following the master's teachings. There are cells even in India today where they are following Gandhiji's ideas.

FJB: Where would you say these cells are?

K: Well, wherever there is constructive work going on.

FJB: So the cells are there?

K: Cells are there.

FJB: But in India as a whole?

K: No.

FJB: What about Vinoba's?

K: Well, he has a cell of his own.

FJB: Yes, but the land movement? Would you say this was...?

K: The land movement (*Bhoodan*), he gave an impetus to it. And then the government are doing it themselves. They are dividing land because they cannot function without dividing land. Now the peasants also want the division of land. But that is not going to solve the problem. Land

alone cannot keep people. They need everything that civilized life requires, not only food but also industry. What kind of industry should we establish here, what will take away unemployment? You know, Japan has a population, twice as that of India per square mile. Yet there is no unemployment there, because industry is decentralized. Japan's population is about 900 per square mile, ours is only 450 per square mile. Yet there is no unemployment there.

FJB: If you were made the leader of the Gandhian Movement, or the Prime Minister, what would you have done?

K: I would continue to do what he had introduced. Because after all he wanted to reform the nation by means of his constructive programme, that constructive programme was accepted by the Congress, it was accepted by the nation. You mean to say because the British disappeared and we went and occupied the places that they used to occupy in the Government, that things were changed? Was our poverty changed, was our unemployment changed, was our population diminished? What happened? Nothing. Nothing in terms of constructive work. Did we become friends of the Hindu–Muslims? It should have continued. He had done some pioneer work under difficult conditions under foreign rule. Now we have our own rule. Things should have continued, but they broke the continuity.

FJB: It is still difficult for me to see that people wouldn't follow what you say ought to have been done. You really told me a good deal about Gandhi. Can I just ask you a general question? When you speak about the law of *karma*, what does that mean?

K: It means science. Can there be any result without a cause? For such a plain composition, why are you troubled about? Can there be a cause without a result, or can there be a result without a cause?

FJB: And it means that whenever something happens, that has a cause.

K: That must have a cause, there is no blind nature. Even the earthquake must have a cause, whether the scientists have discovered it or not is a different thing. But there must be a cause for it.

FJB: But how much freedom do we have within the law of *karma*?

K: That is a very philosophical question you are asking me. As a matter of fact, it is an illusion of freedom. How can we have freedom? The whole past is working upon us, the whole universe is working upon us. We have only a small portion of freedom. How can I explain? This is an illusion which makes us work.

FJB: That makes us work?

K: Otherwise we would sit still. Since we have the illusion that we are the masters, we can do something. If we did not have that illusion how can we do anything? The whole past is upon us. The whole universe is working upon us.

FJB: In which way is the universe working?

K: You mean to say you are an accident, or what? Is the whole life an accident? Either you say it is an accident, or you say it is the result of so many things that have taken place before. You accept either one or the other theory.

FJB: For Gandhi was the law of *karma* important?

K: Yes.

FJB: In which way?

K: His very idea of means and ends, that if you use bad means your ends will be diverted from their objective.

FJB: Does that relate to the law of *karma*?

K: Ah, that is the *karma*. *Karma* means what you have done. *Karma* means action, whatever action you have done. Gandhiji said if you only do the means you don't do the ends. You do the means and the ends automatically come. So you are responsible for the means; not for the ends. And if your means are bad then the end may appear to be the same but will not be the same.

FJB: A Hindu takes reincarnation for granted; he is born with that idea. We are not born with that idea.

K: You are not born with that idea; therefore everything that happens is an accident. What else? If it has no previous cause, it is an accident. All right. What is your idea of hereafter? So far as I have understood, the Christian idea is that one day the graves will open and somehow that very soul which is dead today will rise again. Something like that, I don't know, you know better.

FJB: No, but that doesn't make any sense to you.

K: That also doesn't make any sense. Logically nothing makes sense. But this is a little more understandable than what you have. A little more, not much more. After all, how did evil occur?

FJB: That is the crucial question.

K: That is so.

FJB: This idea of the grave opening is probably...

K: It at least postpones the difficulty.

FJB: Well, not too many Christians today would believe that.

K: But what do they believe then?

FJB: That after death their soul goes on living.

K: Living where?

FJB: Nobody knows that.

K: And then what happens to the body?

FJB: The body disintegrates.

K: When will they rise? Up to eternity they will be living there. Then, when the day of judgement comes they will all get their judgement. Then where will they be? Either in heaven or in hell, and also eternal heaven and eternal hell. This doesn't make any sense. No theory about the universe will make sense in logical terms, remember that.

FJB: There is another question that interests me in terms of the Indian Eastern world. It is often said that we in the West think in terms of opposites—black and white, good and bad. And then you in the East do not think and do not live so much in terms of opposites.

K: No, no. That is wrong. Only the man who has realized can dispense with morality. He must begin with morality.

Then he comes to a stage where man-made laws don't apply to him.

FJB: Yes, now take, for example, the lotus flower. The lotus comes out of mud, it becomes a beautiful flower. And that is often quoted as saying, 'look, black and white or good and bad are not in opposition, because out of the mud comes the beauty'.

K: Yes, yes. But that stage comes after you have kept the moral law, when you have put proper manure, and so on, then the flower comes.

FJB: So it is a different stage?

K: That is the final stage. Therefore, the final stage was when you see the whole working of the universe.

FJB: Would you say that in daily life the opposites are important?

K: Of course they are important. Gandhiji did believe in evil.

FJB: Oh, yes.

K: But Christ did not believe in evil.

FJB: What do you mean, he didn't believe in evil?

K: Were there sinners for him?

FJB: I didn't get your question.

K: Did he hate the sinners?

FJB: He hated the sin, but not the sinners.

K: Yes. How can there be sin without the sinner? But that is a stage about which I can say nothing. But I know that

the progress of man can be through working in society, according to the moral law. Then will come automatically a stage where good and evil don't matter; good and evil as seen by ordinary human beings. Then all what we see, sin and evil, will fall in its proper place in the universal scheme of things.

In the universal scheme of things—the man who has reached that stage knows the universal scheme of things—in which all these things fall into proper place. The good cannot live without evil, evil cannot live without good; there can be no shade without light, and no light without shade. These pairs of opposites are there, and through them you rise to a position in which you see everything in its proper place, in the universal scheme of things. The man who has realized himself sees everything in this universal scheme of things. I can't do more than that.

FJB: Could you just tell me a little bit about yourself? You said you are 86 years old?

K: Yes.

FJB: Where were you born?

K: I was born in Pakistan, near Karachi.

FJB: Did you go to school there? Can you say a little bit about your family? What was your father doing?

K: He was a Government servant. He was one of the bureaucrats.

FJB: And do you have sisters and brothers?

K: Yes.

FJB: How many?

K: We were seven brothers.

FJB: And where do you come in?

K: I come sixth.

FJB: No sisters?

K: I had two sisters.

FJB: And then you went to school near Karachi?

K: Yes.

FJB: What kind of school did you go to?

K: The orthodox schools that were introduced by the British Government.

FJB: The orthodox school, Western school? And then you studied. Where did you do your studies?

K: In my place it is called Hyderabad. In Sind, not the Hyderabad in Deccan. The other Hyderabad that is in this side is in the South. This was Hyderabad in Sind.

FJB: And what did you study there?

K: I studied first of all vernacular, for three or four years, then in English. Everything through English.

FJB: But when you were a lecturer, you were a professor.

K: In English.

There was no other language allowed in the colleges.

FJB: Yes, but did you teach English?

K: I didn't teach English. Some other professor taught English.

FJB: What did you teach?

K: Politics, History. I graduated in History and Politics.

FJB: And how long did you teach.

K: As a matter of fact I was a school teacher for about three years. Then for five years I was a professor in a college.

FJB: Where?

K: In Bihar, where Gandhiji came.

FJB: That was at that time.

K: And then my services were dispensed with. Then for a couple of years, I joined the Benares Hindu University. And I non-cooperated from there when the Non-cooperation Movement began. When the movement began, I left the University with some of the students. After having gone to jail, when I came out, I was invited to manage, to be the Principal of a national education institution started by Gandhiji in Ahmedabad. And I was there for five years.

FJB: As the Principal?

K: As the Principal.

FJB: That was in Gujarat? And then?

K: I again came and joined my Institution that was always working. I was supervising it.

FJB: In Ahmedabad?

K: No, that was in UP, the United Provinces. I non-cooperated from the Benares Hindu University. So my Institution was in Benares. Now its headquarters is in Lucknow. It has spread out through the whole of the province.

FJB: When did you join the Congress?

K: I was a member of the Congress. But in 1934 I became the General Secretary of the Congress and that lasted for 12 years. I was the only person who was the General Secretary for 12 years.

FJB: From 1934?

K: Because it is always for one year. The President is for one year and the Secretary is for one year. The Secretary changes with the President but every President accepted me. So I was there for 12 years. In 1946, I was not the General Secretary. Then I became the President of the Congress.

FJB: Did you become President of the Congress in 1947 or 1948?

K: In 1946, in October or November I began. And the next October or November I resigned, because I did not agree with these people.

FJB: That was after Gandhi's death?

K: No, even when Gandhiji was living.

FJB: You resigned, and why did you not agree with them?

K: Because their policies, as I told you, were different. I didn't believe in those policies.

FJB: Can you say in which way were they different?

K: I was the Congress President. As Congress President I had no power, and they had the power in the government. Negotiations were going on with the British government. They carried on the negotiations. They did not inform me, nothing of that sort. I didn't want to be a figurehead only. Before that, the Congress President was the first person in the whole country. Because they got power they didn't consult me. Power was being transferred, and negotiations were going on. I was nowhere in the negotiations. They decided what they liked. So I said I do not want merely the title of the President of the Congress.

FJB: And what did you do after your resignation?

K: After that I had a political party of my own.

FJB: What party was that?

K: We called ourselves followers of Gandhiji. That was there for about two years. Then socialists and my party came together.

FJB: Socialists and you? The Jayaprakash socialists?

K: Jayaprakash and Lohia, because they began to believe in Gandhi's politics. Therefore I said what is the good of having more parties than necessary, and we joined together.

FJB: And then what happened?

K: There was some bickering among them, not with me. I thought they were a consolidated party. I did not know that they were a divided party. Then Jayaprakash went to *Bhoodan* and Lohia left, then I had also to leave.

FJB: And since that time you haven't been connected with politics?

K: Oh, I have been in Parliament all these years.

FJB: All these years?

K: Only this time I didn't fight.

FJB: Until when? Until last year you were in Parliament? With which party?

K: From the time of the Constitution, I was a member. I was a member of the Constituent Assembly and I have been a member of the Parliament up to last two years.

4

Raihana Tyabji

RAIHANA TYABJI (1901–1975) belonged to an elite Muslim family, and her life is a saga of transition from the life of luxury to simplicity and austerity. Her grandfather, Badruddin Tyabji, was the first Indian Judge on the original side of the Bombay High court and the third President of the Indian National Congress. Raihana was the daughter of Badruddin Tyabji's eldest daughter Ameena who worked for girls' education and participated in the freedom struggle. Raihana's father, Abbas Tyabji, was the chief judge of the erstwhile Baroda state. When he was appointed on the Commission to enquire into the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, he came to know of the cruelty and the atrocities committed by the British government. Consequently he gave up his position, joined the nationalist movement and suffered hardships in the prison. He was Gandhi's trusted lieutenant in the non-violent movement and second-in-command of the Salt Satyagraha.

Nurtured with high ideals and values of her family and moulded by Gandhian ideas, Raihana willingly chose the simple life as Gandhi's follower. Gandhi made tremendous

impact on her mind at a young age. She had seen Gandhi for the first time with Tagore at a reception organized by a family friend. Vivid pictures of the two great persons made an indelible imprint on her mind: Tagore like the sun at its zenith in the noon and Gandhi like the young sun of the morning. As against Tagore's handsome and majestic figure, Gandhi, dressed in the Indian attire, appeared rather small built but fit. Raihana immediately felt that the smaller of the two is in fact greater. This adoration ignited spontaneously lasted throughout her life.

Raihana's Life had two anchors—love of Krishna, the Hindu god, and love for the nation. She was a deeply religious person. She was a unique combination of a devout Muslim and a great devotee to Krishna. Though born in a Muslim family and influenced by the European way of living, she had natural affinity to devotion to Krishna that remained with her till the end. Her book *Heart of a Gopi* bears testimony of this devotion. A unique convergence of the lofty ideals of Islam and Hindu religions had manifested in her life. Gandhi was very appreciative of her recitals of *bhajans* (religious songs) and reciting from the Koran in her melodious voice that had soothing impact on the listeners. He always encouraged her to sing and compose *bhajans*.

She stayed in the *ashram*, toured with Gandhi whenever possible and faced all hardships with a smile on her face. Her selfless devotion to Gandhi and the nationalist cause had endeared herself to Gandhi, who very often referred to her as his 'beloved daughter'. Acutely aware of the political oppression by the British authorities, she had plunged into the movement whole-heartedly. Picketing near the

liquor shops, advocating the boycott of foreign cloth and participating in the satyagraha had caused her wrath of the authorities and had earned jail sentence for her. Despite poor health, she pursued the goal of service to the nation. Taking note of the contribution of Abbas Tyabji and his family to the satyagraha, Gandhi had commented in *Navajivan* on 27 April 1930 that 'Raihana, poor cripple, spends her days and nights thinking of India only'.

Raihana admired Gandhi's great qualities such as sense of humour, organizing ability, time management, respect for honesty, integrity and truth, efforts at character building, selfless love for the people, and fearlessness. Gandhi, in turn, recognized her contribution to the nationalist movement. In his letter dated 25 January 1931 he affectionately addressed her as 'Raihana the crazy' and wrote, 'What a strange girl you are! You fall ill, return home, go out again to work and again fall ill. What wonderful enthusiasm for the cause!' With reference to her fast and nationalist activities at Patan in Gujarat, he had advised her in his letter of 26 February 1931 that, 'In the language of the *Gita* ours is but to do and not to mind the result. If the motive and the action are pure, the doer is not responsible for the manifold consequences that may arise from it.' He always encouraged her to remain involved with the nationalist cause and was concerned about her fragile health. He tried to learn Urdu and even wrote some sentences in Urdu in his letters to her, addressing her as 'Madam Teacher' in one of such letters.

Raihana had signed, with her mother and other prominent women, a letter to the Viceroy in April 1930, bringing out the ill-effects of liquor on the families and the adverse

results of bringing in foreign cloth that deprives women of their employment. It was stated in the letter, 'We feel the force of Gandhiji's argument that women are better fitted for dealing with the question of the prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs and boycott of foreign cloth.'

After independence she continued her spiritual quest and lived in the Gandhi Ashram in Delhi along with Kakasaheb Kalelkar and Sarojben Nanavati. She had this painful realization that the people merely paid lip service and even dragged Gandhi's name; but did nothing to be self-reliant, strong and transparent. They used Gandhi as a tool and did not make him the anchor. She, however, had lived her life according to the norms set by Gandhi. Looking after the sick and the poor, giving patient hearing to the miseries of others and giving healing touch to all pain remained her special qualities till the end.

In conversation (1973)



RAIHANA TYABJI (RT): My first memory of Gandhiji stands out very clearly in my mind. He was a very great figure. I thought he was headline news when he came to Bharat from South Africa. I think he arrived in 1915. He had done *satyagraha* there. He had become the hero of African *satyagraha*. Then he came to Bombay. And there were at that time three very brilliant stars on the firmament. Mrs Annie Besant, Kavi Rabindranath Thakur (Tagore), and now Bapu had also appeared on the scene. Both Thakur and Bapuji were in Bombay and there were parties

and they were invited together. So a party was given by a member of my family and it was a very brilliant affair given in honour of poet Thakur and Gandhiji. And in those days, the Muslim women wore the moralistic *purdah*, and were segregated from the men. The men didn't come up, but poet Thakur and Bapuji were brought up and, I remember them entering the room.

The poet was the most magnificent figure. Really a thing of beauty. Tall and with that white hair, white beard, velvet cap and with his robe and so on, he looked like a *maharshi*. And beside him was that ugly little man clad in, rather scantily, in very thick, very rough *khadi*, and it was a churlish thing. I was about 15 or 16 at that time. I looked at the two. I was a great lover of beauty, beauty affected me tremendously. And Rabindranath Thakur was beauty incarnate in the way he dressed and the way he looked. But I remember I looked at them and I found what came to me was that the little man is the greater of the two and I never changed my opinion after that.

FRED J. BLUM (FJB): And what made you feel that?

RT: Something essential in myself said. It was the simplicity, the contrast between all that velvet and silk and that rough handspun *khadi*, the contrast between a very splendid, very magnificent personality that was conscious of its own magnificence, and the greatness of Bapu's utter unselfconsciousness. Something in me responded to that simplicity, to that self-forgetfulness. Someone who had overcome himself, who had overcome the sense of his own personality, the importance of his own personality, so that he could

enter that very brilliant company, beside this man who made himself look, as my father said, that *Kathiyawadi darzi* (a tailor from Kathiyawad), and to whom it did not matter at all, who was completely himself, completely poised, and completely centered within himself. It was my impression and I never changed my opinion right from 1916 to the very last, 1948. I was very intimately in touch with Thakur, but my opinion never changed. And I can never forget the dramatic entrance of these two people and the tremendous impact of Bapu's personality on me.

The party was in the house of my father's cousin in Bombay. We lived in Baroda, but we were in Bombay at the time, and this was in the house of a relative, and the whole family had gathered in force. It was a very, very brilliant party. Clothes in those days were very brilliant—all gold and silver! And Bapu's utter unselfconsciousness and his being above any kind of atmosphere, I am analyzing this now and putting it into words. It came upon me as an experience of a very great personality. That was the first time I saw him and I never changed my opinion.

FJB: That was the first time you saw him. And can you say a little bit on what contact you had with him afterwards?

RT: In the weeks that followed, there were many parties. I used to sing, so wherever I went I was asked to sing. I visited Bapu after this party several times, and from the first day I felt very intimate with Bapu. The second time, the second tremendous impact was in the house of Mrs Jehangir Petit, a big Parsee businesswoman. Her daughter was a great friend of mine and Mrs Petit had invited again poet Thakur and Bapuji. It was a large house, with a very long verandah,

and with steps in the middle and a porch. We were waiting in the drawing room when they came in a carriage. In those days motors were not available. We heard the carriage and everybody made for the door. I went out by a side door into the verandah. I was standing here, and the carriage stopped here, and the poet and Bapuji came in and they were surrounded by people. Bapu looked around and saw me and he made a beeline for me. He came and he took me in his arms and said, 'You have been in Bombay and you have not come to see me?' I will never forget it, this faithfulness of Bapu's affection. The whole company standing there, and one completely insignificant creature standing in the corner of the verandah far off!

And this is something that I am sure. Bapu never forgot you. He never neglected you. He never made you feel that you did not matter. In all the years that I knew him, this was something remarkable about Bapu. It was not only with me, this happened with everybody. He never allowed you to feel neglected or forgotten. And there were occasions when people from all over Bharat, the most important people, politicians and so on had come, and he never allowed you to feel that you were forgotten although he was immersed in talking with them, absorbed in the most important affairs, but he never allowed you to feel that he had forgotten.

FJB: How come you were invited to these parties, was that through your father?

RT: Well, we knew the Petits very well, we were family friends. The Tyabjis and the Petits knew each other very well and Mr Jehangir Petit's daughter, Hilla Petit and I were

very close friends. But the whole family was invited, all my relatives were invited, my parents also. And I think I sang. People usually invited me because they wanted me to sing for them. But I think even if I hadn't sung I would have been invited because I belonged to my family. My family had not known Gandhi before he came back to India. But my father was invited to the governor's house; there were parties, and so on and so forth.

And these two great people, Bapu and Tagore, were in Bombay and there was a state of excitement. Bapu was in the news for some time now. He had become sort of a hero because of this new thing called *satyagraha* and there was a lot of curiosity and excitement. The British government were prepared to do him honour as long as the *satyagraha* was in Africa. When the *satyagraha* started here in right earnest, however, it was a different matter. Cannot blame them. But after that, things became tighter and I began to see Bapu in different roles—Bapu as the human being. If there is anybody about whom I can say is my ideal of a human being, it is Bapu.

FJB: And what makes you say that?

RT: His never-failing tenderness, never-failing consideration, never-failing respect for human personality, no matter who it was, from the lowest Harijan. In fact I never saw in Bapu any difference between high and low. I regard him as a very great *yogi*, and the longer I live and the more I come to know about these things, the more convinced I am that Bapu is one of the greatest *yogis* ever lived, because the things which he did could only have been done by a *yogi* of

a very high order. His whole consciousness was so utterly unique. I never saw him disturbed.

He used to wake up at 4 in the morning, and after prayers and so on, go for a walk and be surrounded by children. Oh, how he was adored by children, clinging to his shoulders, arms, and legs. This was in Sevagram. He was adored by children wherever he went; he was like the Pied Piper of Hamelin. And then he would come, he would sit spinning and there would be his correspondence, somebody to keep letters and so on. He would go into a garden, look at the flowers, touch them most lovingly, go into the *gaushala* (cowshed), look after each cow, and he would stroke the cows.

He would then visit everybody who was sick or hurt, and give them medicines with his own hand. He would wash their wounds and apply medicines with his own hands, and massage. Then he would return to work again, spinning. Bapu was never without something or the other. And then people would come, crowds and crowds of them. He was never in a hurry, and he never worried. And I have seen him completely concentrated on so many things simultaneously. We call it *anekavadhan*. This is a highly *yogic* power of complete concentration on a variety of things simultaneously. And he also knew. He hid himself very much, for example.

FJB: He hid himself?

RT: He hid himself, he kept himself very secret. I am now convinced that he did it deliberately; he did not want these things to be known about him. But he had it, it wouldn't

be hidden, the thing broke out on occasions. This power in him broke out, for example, in Wardha once. I was going to see him. My neighbour Nandini had wanted to come to Sevagram. I said, 'Look Nandini, I am going to Sevagram, come along', and she came with her two little girls. One was a toddler, the other must have been about three or three-and-a-half years. And we sat in the *tonga* and off we went.

At a certain bend in the road, it must have been about a mile and a half from Sevagram, when we saw Bapu coming for his evening walk. So we stopped the *tonga* and were getting out. Nandini and I were sitting in the back of the *tonga*, and the elder girl was sitting beside the driver. We got down with the little child in Nandini's arms. And when her other daughter was getting down, her frock got caught in the wheel. And the horse started galloping off. She was in the *tonga* and the driver started running. We stood there stunned. The horse was going full gallop on the completely rough and uneven road with fields on both sides. Bapu's people saw the *tonga* coming straight towards them and they ran. When they ran, the horse turned into the field which was very dangerous. So they stopped running and the horse went on, galloping past Sevagram into Segaon village.

You can imagine poor Nandini's worry. Bapu came up and said to her. '*Ghabarao mat, bachhi sahi salamat aajayegi*' (don't worry, the child will return safe and sound). I was in an absolute storm of mental agitation. How did Bapu know? What possibility was there of that child returning safe and sound? The *tonga* was bouncing away, and was on

the point of overturning any moment. There was no way of stopping that horse. I, being educated, lacked faith. Nandini, being simple, had faith. And she had faith in the words of the saint and she became utterly calm and undisturbed. But I was in turmoil, I had things to talk about with Bapu, I talked about them. But, oh dear, my mind was in an absolute turmoil. And suddenly somebody came running from Sevagram and shouted, 'Bapu, the child has returned safe and sound', the exact words Bapu had used. What had happened was that the horse had gone straight past Sevagram into the village of Segaon, had turned at right angle and had crashed into a post. The *tonga* had overturned on top of the child, and the child returned safe and sound! Now how did Bapu know? He said it with utter conviction. It is then that I realized this man had a *yogic* consciousness.

Nobody could possibly know and Bapu was not a person who gave you false hopes. Very forceful. If Bapu said something he said it because he believed it. He never said anything for the sake of saying. I never knew him utter a false assurance. He gave you the courage to face the truth, he injected courage into you. But there was no escaping him. Whatever he said was true. So when he said, 'Don't worry, the child will return safe and sound', there was such an utter conviction. But how, in the face of that terrible danger?

After that I began to watch Bapu carefully. And I recognized many times, many signs of a very, very high *yogic* consciousness. And in fact it is this recognition that made me so firm in faith, at moments when faith could have

been badly shaken in my own life or even in public circumstances. When Bapu spoke things which people did not understand he was severely criticized. My way was to go straight to him and ask.

He was severely criticized over a Hindu–Muslim marriage. A Hindu girl had, without thinking, married a Muslim man, and when she realized that it meant becoming a Muslim, she said, ‘No, I want a divorce’. Bapu said, ‘You can’t play with marriage like that. This is something very serious. You went to a Mullah and you had this marriage. You can’t now say that you want to break it off.’ So he made them go through the Islamic process of divorce, that is, you wait for about six months and then you stay together. And even then if you can’t, you wait for another three months. And then if you can’t, you wait for another three months. And I think, the last time he made them wait for a year. This was in 1919, 1920 or 1921. He was very severely criticized for this and I remember asking him directly about this. It was a very great Congress dinner, the first *khadi* Congress in Ahmedabad. Everybody was sitting. I said to Bapu, ‘Bapu, would you please give me some time? I want to talk to you please.’ And he said, ‘Sit down here’. And he made me sit down beside him, at the table, and he asked, ‘Now what is it?’ And I asked him. I said:

This is what I hear, I don’t believe it Bapu, I don’t believe that there is any Hindu–Muslim bigotry in you. I do not believe that you encouraged that divorce because the girl was Hindu and the boy was Muslim. But I want to know the truth because people are always criticizing you, and I can’t bear it. And if I hear the truth from you, I will be able to tell them.’

And he told me the whole story there, sitting at the table. Unbelievable, and really you have to know Bapu in order to believe that such a person could exist.

FJB: The experience you spoke about, your trip from Bombay to Sevagram and then back to Ahmedabad, you spoke as you remembered. But what struck you most?

RT: My mother left her body in February 1940, and it was a year later that I went to Wardha in order to settle with Kaka Saheb and Saroj. I left Baroda and I settled in Wardha. Bapu was very, very ill at the time. Our houses, little houses, were being built. Jamnalal Bajaj was having houses built for Kaka Saheb and myself, and I was staying with Jamnalalbhair because our little cottage wasn't completed yet. Bapu was at death's door, he was so ill that he was very tired to meet people. So deliberately I did not go. I used to send my *pranam* to him with Jamnalalbhair who used to go everyday. One day Jamnalalbhair said, 'Raihanaben, you must go and see Bapu. Because now he is becoming a little annoyed that you are here and you haven't been to see him. So he minds, that you are not going.' So I went and I will never forget the occasion.

It was 1941. There was a room, a mud hut, as you know, and he was lying on the floor. He was just a thin line of bones. There was nothing of Bapu except bones. I looked at him and I stood in the doorway. I thought I wouldn't be able to control myself. However, I went there. I knelt down beside him. He took me in his arms, thin like two sticks. He couldn't talk and he said in a whisper, 'Raihana, what happened to your old servants?' So there, sitting

back, kneeling beside him, with my head practically on his chest I answered him; about the cook, the pension given to the cook; I told him about the *hamal*, that is the person who swept and cleaned; I told him about our chauffeur, about the gardener, about the *ayahs*, about all the servants who worked; what was given to them, what they were doing, whether they had found fresh employment, or not. And he listened. When he knew they were all safe and properly settled, he gave a sigh and he sat up. In what state Bapu remembered the servants! I have never seen such a man.

Bapu had to be known to be believed. Describing a man like that, it's fantastic. Somewhere around when he had returned from the Round Table Conference, my mother and I went to Borsad, a place in Gujarat, to see him. He was there. Bapu always gave me some time for a private talk. Very kind of him. Talking to him about my *sadhana*, spiritual practices, raised doubts in his mind as to whether what I was doing was right or not, whether it was good for me or harmful. And he thought it was harmful. Bapu thought that certain things that I was doing were harmful and he asked me to change my *sadhana* and do something quite different. At that time I was about 33 or 34. I said, 'Bapu, I think that the *sadhana* that you are prescribing is really not suitable for me with my temperament'. And he said, 'No, no, you are under a delusion. Promise to do what I say for two years and then tell me.' I was very uneasy about this, because I knew my own psychology sufficiently to know that Bapu hadn't understood. I wrote him a long letter in the train saying, 'Bapu, please think it over again,

because I really don't think that this *sadhana* will suit me.' I got a reply saying, 'No, you try out what I said. I think you are labouring under a delusion.' I tried for one year, and it did me a lot of harm, as it was bound to. So I wrote to Bapu saying, 'Bapu, I have faithfully followed your instructions for one year, and I find that this *sadhana* is doing me a lot of harm. Please release me from my promise.' And by return post I got a postcard, 'Raihana, I have faith in you, I release you from your promise.'

FJB: Can you say why he felt your practice was not good and gave you another one?

RT: Yes, I think I can. I think it was again certain rigidity. Bapu had certain very fixed ideas about *sadhana*. And anybody in Bapu's state would have said that. I don't blame him. I was a different kind of person, and the kind of *sadhana* I was doing would be harmful to 99 people out of 100. There was no doubt about that, it was an unusual kind of *sadhana* that I was doing.

FJB: You mean the one you were doing before you talked to him?

RT: Yes. Then I went back to it, because it was the right *sadhana* for me. You see, it might have been harmful for others, but it was the right *sadhana* for me, I was going through it. But I don't blame him for getting frightened, because it was not a *sadhana* that would have suited most people, it would have been dangerous undoubtedly. So I don't blame him. But the point of his greatness in accepting immediately is another thing.

FJB: Could you say why you felt that? You had to follow it for one year though your own feelings were that it wasn't any good?

RT: Obedience to Bapu. The feeling was that he might be right. He was so utterly certain that I was wrong that I was shaken and I felt that after all it was a matter of *sadhana*. My whole object is to grow and to grow in the right direction, and if Bapu was right and I was wrong then I must give his opinion a fair trial.

There was another occasion which is very startling when I was in Sevagram for 18 days. That was very like Bapu also. I was going to stay in Sevagram and Bapu sent me word that it was hot weather. He knew that I couldn't use the lavatory in the *bhartiya* fashion. I needed a commode. So he advised me, 'Bring your commode with you'. You could see me sitting in the *tonga*, perched up with all my effects, and right on top like a throne, that commode, a girl belonging to the Tyabji family!

You really had to know the Tyabji family to understand what a tremendous mental revolution this was, because we were extremely mid-Victorian and puritan. Most of our men were educated in England and they came back with extremely puritan ideas about what should be done, and shouldn't be done, and a commode was a thing which should never be mentioned at all. Now here I was, a woman belonging to the Tyabji family going off happily with a commode perched on my head, so to speak, and not feeling anything at all! That is the point. I go there and there was no Harijan for scavengers. Bapu kept no Harijans. The latrines and so on had to be cleaned by the *ashram* people

themselves. I would willingly have cleaned my own commode, but Bapu said, 'No, you are ill and weak and it will be too much of a strain. Your commode will be cleaned by Vijaya.'

One morning Vijaya, perhaps because of much work, forgot. So, I took the commode, the pot and started walking off with it. You had to pass Bapu's hut and reach the boundary. The cleaning place was outside. I started walking quite happily with the pot in my hand. It was one of the funniest things. Around Bapu's hut there was a crowd of people waiting. Waiting to interview him and talk to him. And here was I going happily and quite unselfconsciously with the commode in my hand, passing through the crowd. Amtussalam came up, running. She caught sight of me from a distance. She was so distressed and said, 'Ma'am, what are you doing?' And there was Amtussalam and I fighting over that pot as to who should clean it. The whole thing was so spontaneous. However, she snatched the pot from me and took it off. Afterwards it occurred to me, what a fantastic thing this was to happen to a woman of the Tyabji family, brought up as I had been. Even my father wouldn't enter my room without knocking. This was what Bapu did to you. He released your consciousness from yourself.

FJB: What were the reasons? Why did you go to Sevagram and his *ashram*?

RT: Oh, we used to visit him in Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad was about four hours distance from Baroda, and my parents and I used to visit him once a week, or a couple of times a month. I never stayed with Bapu because my health was

such that *ashram* conditions and the food wouldn't have suited me. Then my health improved considerably. It was good enough for me to go there, and I stayed for about 18 days in Sevagram in Wardha. I went because I wanted to be near Bapu, because I wanted to have experience of the *ashram*. I had never stayed with Bapu. I wanted to watch him closely, I wanted to study the life there at close quarters, and so I was there. It was a very rewarding experience.

FJB: Did you ever stay with him for a longer period of time?

RT: No, I visited him.

FJB: You must have been very close to him. Did you participate in any of his *satyagraha* campaigns?

RT: Well, yes. I participated in the campaigns but I did not go to prison because I was not in the condition. But I did in 1942. I was in the 1942 *satyagraha*. I went to prison thrice. First of all a year in Nagpur, and then, when we were in Bombay, I was in prison for 15 days or about a month. And once for 24 hours—that was very important. Kasturba, our national mother, had left her body. And the government issued orders that no public prayers were to be held in her memory, or in her honour. So we had tremendous public prayers on the Chowpatty sands. And while we were having our prayers the police came and hauled us up and kept us in lock up for 24 hours. A very, very interesting experience.

FJB: In which way?

RT: For one thing, to be with a group of women—Maharashtrian, Gujarati, all sorts, all ages, even little girls.

And the kind of consciousness that had been created by Bapu's training of *satyagraha*. It was one of the most inspiring things. I mean, there we sat for hours and hours. I had a weak body, I never knew. I wasn't conscious of time at all. We were in a state of consciousness where the body did not exist, prison atmosphere did not exist, and jailers did not exist. Bapu kept us in that condition for 40 years. For 40 years this *Maha Yogi* kept the national consciousness on a plinth. But really we weren't aware of the days that passed right from 1916 to the last. How we lived those years, I don't know, I don't remember. We were in a state of consciousness which was quite abnormal in a way.

FJB: In which way?

RT: Well, for one thing we were up against the British government. We were prepared for *satyagraha* at any moment, we were prepared for prison at any moment, we were prepared to leave our houses and everything confiscated at any moment. Until the British left Bharat, this was the continuous state of mind because at no time did we know what would happen to us. When the salt *satyagraha* took place at Dharasana my father went to prison twice at the age of 75. There was my mother. We were in a constant state of activity, sometimes going off to villages, meeting people and having other meetings. And the remarkable thing was, Bapu had insisted that this was the fatherland, and that this was a spiritual way. It wasn't merely a national movement. It wasn't merely enmity against the British government or against the British. It was a fight, a nonviolent fight, for human freedom. We were not to allow any sort of anger to enter our heads. What kind of consciousness was

created by Allah through this *yogi*, I didn't know. But I do know that for 40 years we lived in this state of complete uncertainty.

FJB: When you look back to your contacts with Gandhiji, what did he do to you, what did it mean for your life?

RT: For one thing a complete change of consciousness. From a sense of slavery and helpless worry about foreign domination to a sense of complete freedom and human dignity. Change of my consciousness from that of a slave to that of a free human being. And that you get throughout the nation. How were otherwise little children of eight, five, or ten years able to stand and take bullets in their chests? They were shot down in Kota by British policemen. How did mothers leave their children and go off to prison in the 1942 movement? Thousands upon thousands of the children starved. How were mothers able to bear it? It was a complete change of consciousness, and it lasted all these years. I am now utterly convinced that it was Bapu's own *yogic* greatness which so infused our own consciousness that we were prevented from becoming a nation of lunatics. Forty years in cold blood, it's no joke, that you are living in utter uncertainty never knowing what's going to happen to you, your family, your house, and your earnings. And never being aware of it, that's the point. It is only now that I have come to have experience of *yogic* consciousness that I begin to see what a *yogi* Gandhi was!

FJB: Can you slightly elaborate what you mean by *yogic* consciousness?

FT: *Yoga* is an allround training of the whole being of our ten bodies and fifteen senses, towards greater and greater human development, towards perfection. I define the *yogic* consciousness as a consciousness that is both there and here. A consciousness that is completely detached from human life and living has now become for me incomplete, incompletely developed. Formerly I thought that was the finest *samadhi*. You are completely lost and not aware of your body. If somebody bothers you, you don't know. Now I don't. Now I have come to believe that the highest consciousness is a controlled consciousness which functions perfectly in both there and here simultaneously. And this is what Bapu had. Therefore I have come to regard him as one of the greatest *yogis* of all time. The older I grow the more convinced I become. As I look back, there were some people who grew through Bapu, and by Allah's grace I consider myself one of them. Because I had my own guru and he did not let me become utterly dependent on Bapu as others did. I accepted Bapu's principles but not in toto. And I told Bapu, 'Bapu, I accept this principle and I will try to bring it into my life and into action, but I don't accept this principle and I am not going to do anything about it'. And he never insisted.

FJB: Do you mind to say what you did not accept?

RT: I did not accept, for instance, the principle of *brahmacharya* as he practised it. To me, married life was a very sacred thing, and I felt that while abstinence in an army was a necessity, abstinence must not be made the rule of life for everybody. This was something I came to

believe after many years of experience. I started off by believing in *brahmacharya* absolutely, as Bapu believed in. Then gradually as I saw it affected some people, I began to change my mind. I began to realize more and more that the Islamic attitude towards the man–woman relationship was much more acceptable to me. In fact, I felt it completely satisfying. Because it is the middle path and the sacredness of the marital relationship is so stressed in the Koran. I told Bapu this.

Also *ahimsa*. As the years passed, gradually I began to believe less and less in the rigidity of non-violence as practiced by those who are followers of *ahimsa*. And I began to see that there is a middle path. There can be such a thing as non-violence on the physical plane which leads to extreme violence on the other planes. For instance, a man practicing abstinence becomes a sadist, and he becomes violent on the mental or emotional plane.

FJB: That is something you observed?

RT: That is something that I observed and something that I had to deal with, because women brought their troubles and I learnt through their troubles. Therefore I changed my ideas. I told Bapu, ‘Bapu, I don’t believe in such and such things and therefore I am not going to proceed. I do believe in such and such things and I am going to follow.’

FJB: What did you believe in?

RT: Well, I believed in freedom, *swaraj* and *khadi*. And, of course, I have never had untouchability in my life, touching and not touching. This had nothing to do with

the Gandhian principles, because we were Muslims. But I believed very much, for example, in simplicity and in *shram*, in doing things with one's own hands, and in *svavalamban*, that is to say, in being independent, and so on. Of the eleven vows, Gandhian principles, I believed in most *swadeshi*, and *sparshabhavana*. And I followed those.

FJB: What did *swadeshi* mean to you in this context?

RT: To me *swadeshi* means everything that belongs to my own culture. I am free to import of my own choice and at my own discretion what I think is good for the culture of other countries. But *swadeshi* for me is my own unadulterated culture, whether it is *swadeshi* ideas, *swadeshi* principles, *swadeshi* social usage, or *swadeshi* products. But it must be pure and unadulterated Bhartiya, nothing hybrid about it. For me, *swadeshi* is complete freedom from hybrid dilution. I don't like mixture, and I certainly object very much, to what I might call imposed mixture as prescribed by the doctor. If I think that something is very good somewhere I will import it myself, I'll use it myself, but I won't have it imposed. So *swadeshi* for me meant something much greater, it meant an attitude of mind, not merely homemade products. *Khadi*, for me, meant the *prana* of the earth. *Prana*, that is life force, of the earth coming through the cotton mixing with the life force of the spinner, then again mixing with the life force of the weaver. So that *khadi* is for me a mixture of *prana*, life forces. And I become so enamoured of it that I can't wear anything but *khadi*, I can't wear any other cloth.

FJB: And you still do it?

RT: Oh yes, oh yes. I have never ceased. It is not for me a mere cloth, it is for me *prana*, and I find other cloth dead and lifeless. Cloth that has been through the machine or through iron, I find dead.

FJB: I understand what you say about *brahmacharya*, but I am not yet clear what you mean when you say you didn't accept *ahimsa*.

RT: *Ahimsa* in the rigid sense. Let me give you an example. A man called Chopra attacked a man called Nanavati, caught him and beat him up, and the people of this institution stood around and watched. They were too non-violent to interfere. They allowed Nanavati to be beaten up. (Shamsi was sitting here and he heard the sound of beating, and he rushed off.) To me that is sheer cowardice, I do not believe in this *ahimsa*. A man got drunk, and attacked his sister-in-law, who was alone, and the woman sent for Shamsi and there was another young man Gopinathan also, but people of the institution stood around and watched. And it was these two young men who caught hold of him, took him off, beat him up and saved that woman. According to these people, Shamsi and Gopinathan were violent. According to me those people were cowards, they didn't send for the police, and they didn't try to stop that man themselves, they were too non-violent.

FJB: But do you feel that Gandhi would have approved of that?

RT: Gandhiji himself said that violence is much better than cowardice. You see, this is a misinterpretation against which

I have had to fight for years. People have tried to impose it upon me also. Finally, I came to the conclusion that mine was the middle path, both of the *Gita* and of the *Koran*.

FJB: And how would you express this middle path?

RT: Well, if you have to fight a crusade, you fight a crusade. You don't fight, you don't indulge in violence for your personal end. But if you have to fight for a principle, if you have to fight in defence, you do it. For example, I told Kaka Sahib in Wardha at the time of the Pakistan attacks:

Look Kaka Sahib, women come and sit in my little house. And I tell you, if *goondas* come, I am going to attack them with everything that I have. I am not then going to think of whether I am violent or non-violent. My job is to protect the lives and chastity of the women who have taken refuge in my house, and I am not going to establish my own *ahimsa* at their expense. So I tell you, if violence is needed I will be violent. I will take whatever comes into my hands and attack, in order to give those women a chance to escape.

It is not in my principle to allow my friends to be killed simply in order to establish my principles of non-violence. It is not my life that matters. It is the chastity and life of the women who are here. So if I sin, all right, I am prepared to suffer for it, but I do not consider my principle to be more important than them.

FJB: Could you say what you feel is the essence of *satyagraha*?

RT: *Satyagraha*—*satya* is truth, and *agraha* is insistence. The essence is *satya*, that is truth. *Satyagraha* is the insistence

on the truth that all individuals are free, and that all individuals have a right to freedom, and that nobody has any right to dominate anybody. And he who allows himself to be dominated either through fear or through greed or out of self-interest of any sort, is a coward and not fit to live. So the essence of *satyagraha* for me is the truth of the dignity of humanity, the spiritual dignity and the spiritual greatness of humanity, which must not bow before any power, save Allah. And, as far as I can see, that is Bapu's definition of *satyagraha*.

FJB: You have known Gandhi for over a long period of time. Can you say something about how his ideas on *satyagraha* changed during that time, assuming that they did change?

RT: I don't know that. I am not aware of any change. As far as I can see his ideas on many matters changed, but not on *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* is the non-violent resistance of evil, whether it is governmental, social, or any other sort.

FJB: When I talk to people about Gandhi, they often say, 'Oh, well, it worked against the British, but it would not work in any other situation.' Can you comment on this?

RT: I agree with you.

FJB: You agree?

RT: Yes. It did work with the British, it can work in other situations, but it wouldn't work in all situations. And I came to this conclusion in Wardha when I saw how non-violence did not work, either in favour of the Mussalmans when the Hindus attacked, or in favour of the Hindus when the

Mussalmans attacked or in favour of the Sikhs. And the greatest shock to me was how *ahimsa* did not work with Godse who shot Bapu twice in cold blood. Then I began to think.

Did *ahimsa* work with the Romans? Did *ahimsa* work with the martyrs who were flung in front of the lions or who were persecuted? They were completely *ahimsak*, but they were not protected, and they had to suffer. It did not change people's hearts. Now I began to wonder why did it not? I came to the conclusion that *ahimsa* does not work where the attacking party is also obsessed with a principle. The Mussalmans really thought that the Hindus were out to destroy Islam entirely. And the Hindus when they attacked were obsessed with anger, which, I think, is quite justifiable, the way their women had been raped. This is during the Hindustan–Pakistan divide. Then, the Hindus and Sikhs retaliated. It is the Mussalmans who started it. And in fact, to such an extent, that my *huzoor* had said very sternly, 'Pakistan is built upon the ravishment of women, on the blood of children and it is for you a sin to eat or drink anything in Pakistan'. I have never set foot in Pakistan since then.

So whatever the Hindus and Sikhs did, they were obsessed. *Ahimsa* does not work where the attacking party is also obsessed by a principle as Godse was. He really thought, and I don't blame him, that Bapu was out to destroy Hinduism in Bharat, and out to hand over Bharat to the Mussalmans. And it was really a kind of violent loyalty to his own religion. There fore, Bapu's *ahimsa* did not work. Fourteen times Bapu had been attacked, his life had been attacked, and his *ahimsa* worked. But it did not work in the

case of Godse, because Godse was absolutely obsessed by a principle, for which he was prepared to give his life.

FJB: What would you say to the events in Calcutta when Gandhi went there and really calmed a city that was just emerging out of a blood bath?

RT: There the people were prepared. I would say that in such a case the people had now suffered enough, and were prepared to accept real peace, were prepared to accept the influence of a great saint. But there were places where he went but people didn't listen.

FJB: Where was that? In Bihar or in Noakhali?

RT: In the later years people began to be less and less influenced by Bapu, because they began to have more and more desires of their own. As freedom drew nearer as the British went, and as power began to come to Congress, they listened less and less to Bapu because now their own personal desires interfered. And that includes everything, urges towards violence and everything. And in fact Bapu said to himself, 'I am not going to live for 125 years, nobody listens to me now'. So as long as people's hearts were given to an ideal they listened to a saint, but when they were tempted by power they stopped listening. Then they listened to the voice of power.

FJB: And how do you explain this?

RT: Human nature.

FJB: But that would mean that human nature is not capable of a higher consciousness.

RT: Oh no, not everybody did that. Hundreds of people, perhaps thousands, refused power and kept working in the villages. And it is they who have kept the Gandhian picture of power alive in our hearts. They have never swerved from the path that they took up, and they are doing simply wonderful work in the villages, which is never talked of.

FJB: When you spoke of the 'Quit India Campaign' where you participated, what was the role you took?

RT: Of course, *satyagraha*. They had curfew in Wardha, and we weren't allowed to take out processions. So we took out a procession and we resisted—as simple as that. The idea was to break the law, and we broke it.

FJB: Was the idea for as many people as possible to break the laws so that the whole machinery of government would be undermined?

RT: Yes, Yes, exactly. It was an iniquitous law and we broke it.

FJB: Can you describe the atmosphere in this country at this time?

RT: This is what I mean, when I speak of a most remarkable state of consciousness. I can't describe it. What words can I find for it? It wasn't hysteria; it was a kind of ecstasy of freedom. We were put in lockups. I can't tell you the filth, I can't tell you the kind of food, I can't tell you the living conditions in which we were, and it just didn't occur to us! The consciousness was so freed that we lived in that filth and it just didn't occur to us! Then we were taken to Nagpur and there we were kept day and night. Afterwards,

they didn't leave us for a year. And I can't tell you how happy we were. As far as I am concerned it was the happiest year of my life, so far. I realized what a year of freedom means. Complete freedom from domestic pressures, social pressures, from any kind of pressures. Just a few prison laws were to be observed, and you are completely free. I have never known such freedom. The result was that when I returned from prison, I felt the whole world was a vast prison, and I fell very ill. And then I was told that happened to many people. They couldn't bear the impact after having been in that very peaceful atmosphere. They couldn't bear the impact of the world when they came out. I couldn't bear big houses and I couldn't bear a lot of furniture, and everything sort of got me by the throat. We had become used to huge barracks, completely empty, very low doors, no windows, just bars. There were about 35 women in one barrack. We had become used to living within ourselves, to creating our own privacy within ourselves. I fell very ill after coming from prison. So it was an entirely different consciousness, removed from the ordinary physical one and we lived in that all those years. That's how we were able to live and remain sane.

FJB: What do you mean when you say 'all these years'?

RT: Right from 1916, when Bapu started talking about freedom, to 1947 when the British left.

FJB: I would like to talk a little bit more about *satyagraha*, and here is something Kripalani wrote and I wonder whether you could comment on it. He says:

The Indian effort has always been to resolve apparent contradictions through a dialectical process of its own. This does not require destructive revolutions to eliminate the thesis and the antithesis and establish on that destruction, a temporary and unstable synthesis. Coordination is achieved through the force of thought and by virtue of certain basic ideas. The genius of the Indian people is constructive, catholic and assimilative. It is neither negative nor destructive.

RT: From the experience that I have, I would say, I don't know about all that antithesis and synthesis and so on. It is beyond me. But I can say that we are on the whole positive people. If we hadn't been positive people we couldn't really have stood non-stop the kind of cold war of nerves that went on right from 1919 when the Jalianwala Bagh holocaust took place till 1947. We lived in tension and how we managed to remain sane and normal I don't know. But I think it is because we are positive people, and we are also constructive. This is how we were able to assimilate. We are also assimilated, otherwise we couldn't have assimilated this entirely new idea of mass *ahimsa* used against a violent power. And I think in this matter Kripalaniji is right, because if we hadn't been like that as a nation, I don't think we could have survived.

The whole point is, having survived this, we suffered from reaction. There were two sorts of people: those who grew, those to whom *satyagraha* was a spiritual idea. They grew and they didn't change afterwards, because they had nothing to do with the leaving of the British or the staying of the British. It was an inner growth, and whatever we did we did for the sake of that inner growth, which is what

Bapu wanted. There were those who followed Gandhiji in order to get rid of the British and they wanted power. And when they got power they became mad with power. So there were these two sorts, those who went after Gandhiji not for *satyagraha* but for power, and those who went after Gandhiji's principle. I make a distinction because if Bapu had left his principle, I can say for myself, I would have left Bapu. It wasn't the person that mattered, it is the principle. And those of us who followed the principle have remained firmly fixed in that. They have not changed. And in fact, through the years that principle has grown bigger and we have grown with it.

FJB: In the discussion in England *satyagraha* has been several times compared to a dialectic.

RT: What is a dialectic?

FJB: It is something where you have a transforming process, you say 'yes' and 'no' but out of this comes a synthesis, do you see? It brings two opposites together on a new plane, on a new level of consciousness. As Kripalani says, 'However, the dialectic of *satyagraha* ultimately rests on the mystical premise, that realization of truth mutually liberates both parties and establishes them in love for all'.

RT: Quite. It should be like that. Not that it is, because after all one gets what one wants.

FJB: Can you say a little more?

RT: You are practising *satyagraha*. I won't say 'against' because *satyagraha* isn't practised against. But you are practising *satyagraha* against what you think is my wrongdoing. If,

in my heart, I am uncertain about my right, I will respond to the *satya* in your *agraha*. I will respond to the truth in your insistence. But if I am utterly convinced that what I am doing is right, then it is my *satyagraha* against yours, and it does not result in mutual love and so on and so forth; it results in Pakistan and Hindustan.

FJB: Do you feel that this happened between Gandhiji and Jinnah?

RT: Yes, this complete refusal to meet Bapu not only half way but at any point of the way on Jinnah's part. It proves my point exactly. Nothing that Bapu could do could move Jinnah because he was obsessed with the desire for power and by a desire to lead the Mussalmans towards power, to sultanic power. That is how he, what shall I say, misled the Mussalmans. He promised that they would have *sultanic* power in the Mughal sense that they would rule over the whole of Bharat, as the Mughals ruled. That the Muslims would become sovereign in Bharat.

FJB: But how could they rule over Bharat if there was a division?

RT: Oh, that happened afterwards. The division came afterwards. The Mussalmans went after Jinnah because he promised them this. And when they found that they couldn't have it, they said, 'all right, then let us have our own country, we won't live here'. And so we had a division. And this division wasn't merely a matter of Hindus and Mussalmans. This was something that was wanted by the British, and something that was wanted by America. There were a whole lot of elements involved. It's a very dirty business.

FJB: The real problem we talk about here is when does *satyagraha*—have this mutually transforming power and when it doesn't?

RT: In the matter of Pakistan it didn't because the Mussalmans were obsessed with the sense of power. What they wanted was power, not spiritual transformation. This is what I meant when I said it depends on what you want. What they wanted was power, freedom to exercise power. And therefore, there was no mutuality, no matter how *ahimsa* Bapu was, or his group was. It had no effect on the Mussalmans at all. What they wanted was Pakistan and power.

It didn't work on Godse either because what he wanted was to protect the Hindu *dharma*.

FJB: How could he really believe that Gandhi wanted to destroy the Hindu *dharma*? Did he see the Hindu *dharma* in purely traditional terms?

RT: Yes, I think so. There are many things I think Bapu realized later. But there were many things which Bapu got rid of in the Hindu *dharma*, saying that they were useless and unnecessary and did Hinduism a lot of harm. I came to know this when I began to deal with Hindu problems, with the problems of Hindus in the mystic way. Then I saw what tremendous harm had been done by the wiping away of the *bindu*, the *kumkum*, which protects this particular *chakra*.

He said it was quite unnecessary. I found it is extremely necessary. It does tremendous amount of harm for the Hindu *prakruti*, the Hindu being conditioned, being a certain type of person needs certain protection of his *chakras*, and this is a very great protection.

FJB: Can you say a little more, in which way this is a great protection?

RT: We have these vibes of *chakra*. For the woman, this is a *dharma chakra*, that is, the centre of spiritual power for her, especially of marital blessedness. When she puts the *kumkum* here, it has certain mystic power, and it keeps the aetheric forces away. So this is safe from attack. Today Hindu women apply lipstick here and *huzoor* makes them wipe it off, wash it off, and he makes me keep *kumkum* here and apply it. He says, 'you don't know what you are doing'. So there were lots of things like that in the Hindu way of living, in everyday living which Bapu did away with and it was very harmful.

FJB: Can you give a few other examples?

RT: The complete rejection of all colour, for example. You had to wear white saris, without even a colourful border. It did a lot of harm because we are people who need colour. I understand that it was a necessity because of *satyagraha*, because the *ashram* was, after all, a stay-in camp for *satyagraha*. He took vitality out of colour, so I began to see how devitalizing the colourlessness was, how dangerous getting rid of the *kumkum* was, how dangerous getting rid of the glass bangles was. Psychologically it did a tremendous amount of harm.

FJB: In which way?

RT: The glass bangles and so on, they all have mystic properties and they also have a very great psychological effect. So when a married woman puts on these bangles she has a certain sense of responsibility like a wedding ring.

Psychologically speaking, it is like a wedding ring. When our Hindu women take these things off, she loses something, exactly as a woman does when she takes off her wedding ring, although she has a husband.

FJB: Now if I rightly remember, Gandhi insisted that Kasturba take off these?

RT: She did, she had to. There was a great fight over it.

FJB: In which way?

RT: That was one of the things that I went and asked Bapu about. You see, after all, Ba wanted to live in the *ashram* and she was an example for the women. The bangles, they cost money. And Bapu said:

This is a poor country and there is no money to waste. You are soldiers. You can't afford to have these things, breakable things and smashable things and so on. You are soldiers and you must be dressed like soldiers. You must be prepared to go anywhere, you mustn't wear anything that will draw the attention of men towards you.

Perfectly right from the *satyagraha* point of view. That was really a military camp. Ba couldn't bear to get rid of the bangles. So Bapu said:

Look, you are an example for the women. I cannot allow you privileges which are denied to them. Either they all wear bangles or you don't wear bangles if you desire to remain in the *ashram*. But if you cannot endure the *ashram* rules then I give you full freedom to go and live with your brother. I won't compel you but if you live in the *ashram* you must follow the *ashram* rules.

So she took off the glass bangles, tied the cotton thread around her wrist, and that was that. From that point of view, from the point of view of *ashram* discipline, Bapu was perfectly right.

FJB: But Ba was not involved as a *satyagrahi*?

RT: Oh, very much so.

FJB: In that particular situation?

RT: Oh, in all that, right from the beginning. Oh yes. Bapu was a *satyagrahi*, so Ba was a *satyagrahi*. In fact she was the leader of the women, absolutely.

FJB: And was she really in that with her own heart?

RT: Heart and soul. In fact Bapu couldn't have done half of what he did if it hadn't been for Ba.

FJB: In which way?

RT: Well, through encouragement, through help, every sort of help, every sort of cooperation. Oh, Ba was a tremendous power. In fact there are many of us who regarded Ba no less than Bapu. Bapu wouldn't have been Bapu if it hadn't been for Ba. Can't separate the two. Tremendous person, tremendous personality. Wonderful.

FJB: But if I remember, when we talked about this before briefly that Ba was very disturbed to have to take off the bangles.

RT: Yes, she was, very disturbed, very distressed, very unhappy. But the point is that she took those off, and afterwards did not make a fuss. This is something, it's traditional,

it has been there for thousands of years. Naturally, she was very disturbed and very unhappy, because it meant interfering with her *subhag* that is to say, with married blessedness. It is regarded as extremely inauspicious; it is exactly like the wedding ring, very inauspicious to take off, or to break your bangle. So she was very unhappy, very distressed. But she did it because it was a choice of either keeping the bangle, or remaining near Bapu and cooperating with him. And the amount of work that she did! You should have seen her right from morning till night. She looked after the kitchen, the guests, and she kept so cheerful, happy, and laughing. Such a darling, adorable couple—Bapu and Ba.

FJB: What about the children? Harilal was a real problem?

RT: Well, I didn't come in personal contact with the children. I don't know them. I know a little about them. Devadas Gandhi I have heard most about, because as a youngster I saw him very often. Ramdasbhai and Devadas. Ramdas I knew particularly. I think that was the third son. Devadas Gandhi, I think, was the youngest, the fourth son. There was one son who was in Africa, Manilalbhai, I think, and there was one Harilal Gandhi.

FJB: But you don't know much about Gandhi's or Ba's relationship with the children?

RT: He has written about it in his *Experiments with Truth*, and as far as I can see, except for Harilal Gandhi, and the son who was in Africa, we saw his relationship, or their relationship, the parents' relationship with Ramdasbhai and Devadasbhai, and they were the relationships of a

soldier or a general with his family. These young men were set to work, and I think they went to prison for a time and then they began to earn their own living and they were un-interfered with. Devadas Gandhi married Rajaji's daughter Lakshmi, and I think it was he who carried on the *Hindustan Times*, and earned a lot of money. Bapu didn't interfere; he allowed them to lead their own lives, in their own way. There seems to have been a quite pleasant relationship. I did not meet Devadas bhai much, but I met Ramdasbhai a lot because he was in Nagpur, and he used to come very often to Wardha with his wife and I used to live there. I didn't find anything abnormal at all.

FJB: Harilal really was in great conflict.

RT: Yes he was in great conflict.

FJB: What was really underneath that?

RT: As far as I have been told, and I think it is likely to be fairly correct, Bapu was very strict, very harsh with the children in the days of his youth. He softened considerably afterwards, and I was told Harilal Gandhi, this young man, was in a state of rebellion.

FJB: You say he was strict with all children?

RT: You see when he came to Bharat he was already middle aged. But I can imagine he would have been strict, strict to harshness, because in discipline Bapu was bigoted. He softened and loosened up considerably afterwards, but I think he began by being extremely austere and strict. A very, very strict disciplinarian, and if he hadn't been so, *satyagraha* would have been impossible.

FJB: Why?

RT: Well, you can't have an army without very strict discipline. Here he was having to deal with thousands of people of all sorts, of all ages, of all races, *Bharatiya* races—Maharashtrians and Gujaratis and Bengalis, all sorts. How could he possibly have coordinated them unless he had been a very strict disciplinarian?

FJB: Well, did he train the people?

RT: Oh, yes.

FJB: How were they trained?

RT: They were trained in *shibirs*, and camps. My own niece was in one and I saw how beautifully she was trained. They were very fine training camps, and they were trained in all kinds of ways and they did such excellent work.

FJB: Could you describe a little bit the training they had?

RT: I never went to the camps myself, because as I said I was bedridden. But in these camps, and in the *ashrams*, they were made to do every possible sort of work, and they had to go anywhere they were sent, they had to do anything they were told, they had to resist wherever they were told they had to practice *satyagraha* wherever they were told. They were soldiers; soldiers on duty all the time.

FJB: Was there a great emphasis on the development of consciousness or was it things like constructive work?

RT: There was a great emphasis, but through action, not in words. The whole training was such that the consciousness was naturally and effortlessly nurtured. I came to know of

this afterwards, when the *satyagraha* period was past. One isn't aware of these things while they are happening. It is only when they are finished that you see that you have come through them. Years later you realize what had really happened. What I am saying to you today I realized only now. As I look back, and as I think in the light of all the experience that I have been in since, it is then that I realize what I gained in those years of *satyagraha*, and what we all gained.

FJB: Can you sort of sum up what you gained?

RT: As I say, from slavery to a consciousness of freedom. Also simplicity, less of personal needs, less stress on the satisfaction of personal desires, more emphasis on principle, more emphasis on right action, and more emphasis on right relationships. In short, more and more emphasis on the essential rightness of living. This is what Bapu taught, because this is what I was left with and this is what many others were left with, a sense of the rightness, the essential rightness. It is unbelievable, I can say it because I belong to the Tyabji family and the Tyabji family was extremely conventional, very aristocratic in its way. And the way my father changed, my mother changed, I myself changed, my niece changed, members of my family changed with this *satyagraha* training. Fantastic!

FJB: Did your father also have this training?

RT: Oh yes, very much so.

FJB: But does it mean he was in a camp?

RT: He was 65 when he joined Gandhiji and he was trained to begin an intricate life. He had to go to the villages, he was

to work amongst the villagers, he lived with the villagers, he ate with the villagers, he had to sleep on the ground, in short, he had to change all his habits. That's how he was able to stand prison life. At the age of 75 he went twice to prison.

FJB: So he also was in the independence movement?

RT: Oh, yes, very much so. In fact he was one of the leaders.

FJB: But besides having to go to the villages, what else was done as part of the training?

RT: Going into the villages didn't merely mean walking into the villages and walking out again. It meant staying there, talking with the people, dealing with their affairs, and where the government was practising rascality, fighting with the government. We were in a state of *satyagraha* the whole time. There was no peace time for us. Wherever there was wrongdoing on the part of the government, people like my father had to go, had to rouse the people, and had to resist the government. So we were in a state of resistance the whole time, all these years. The people had to be trained to resist. People, for example my father, had to go and stay in the village. He had to meet the villagers, he had to have meetings, he had to explain to the men and women, and he had to lead them to resist whatever was wrong. Whether there were wrong traditions, wrong usages, wrong habits, such as drinking, drugging, gambling, and so on, all these things had to be fought. So it was a very stiff and very rigid training on all fronts.

FJB: Now, how were people trained during the Salt March? Wave by wave of people came forward to be hurt, seriously injured, knocked down, or mistreated.

RT: Yes, yes. Unbelievable were the things done to them and those they endured.

FJB: But how could they be trained for this?

RT: They were trained by their leader. There were group leaders, country leaders, town leaders, and village leaders. They were trained in *ashrams*, towns, or camps. They left their schools and colleges by the thousands, and they just joined these camps and were trained.

FJB: Were those camps all over the country?

RT: Yes, all over the country; in the north of Bharat, Bengal and so on; all over Gujarat and a great deal over Maharashtra—because in Maharashtra the leaders were with Bapu—and somewhat in the South.

FJB: I wonder whether you could tell me what you feel is the essence of *satyagraha*. Did you talk to Gandhiji about it?

RT: We were trained in *satyagraha* by Bapu. In fact, the whole struggle for freedom in all its aspects was *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* is insistence on truth, *satya-agraha*. And all who insist on truth, and who struggle or fight in the name of truth, whether they fight with or without weapons, are doing *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* is a fight against evil, it is resistance to evil. Now when it was said, ‘resist not evil’, I believe that the meaning was ‘resist not evil by evil’, because after all the whole point of an incarnation like Hazarat Issa is resistance to evil. So when he took the whip against the money changers in the temple, for me that is one of the most important happenings, because it shows a balance,

such a *yogic* balance, between love as love and tenderness, and love as power against evil. So that particular episode makes Hazrat Issa very complete for me, in a way that Lord Buddha isn't. Since he functions in one way only, and he doesn't therefore satisfy. In *satyagraha* it has to be a struggle on all fronts and if it is necessary for you to resist evil by a defensive violence never regret it. That was *jihad*.

FJB: *Jihad*, what does that mean?

RT: *Jihad* is a fight for the defence of religion; the defence of the poor, needy and the old; the defence of the chastity and safety of women; defence of children; and defence of right. But it is a war for righteousness; it is really *dharma yuddha*, it is exactly *dharma yuddha*. So for me, being what I am, any spiritual system that lacks any one of these elements is incomplete. And, therefore, when Hazarat took the whip against the money changers in the temple he became very complete for me. I could quite understand that Bapu was given a certain technique by the Lord and that technique was grounded in non-violence, that is to say, the abstinence from violent practice. Not only that, but abstinence from violence in thought. This is why when the British left, we had no feelings of unfriendliness or bitterness towards them. And in fact Americans and others were quite resentful about this. They said, 'but how is it that you don't hate the British?' I said, 'We were trained not to'. Because it would no longer have been *satyagraha* if there had been hatred behind our action. There was no hatred against anything. There was a decision to be free human beings.

FJB: I can see this in Bapu, I can see that in you. Now, to what extent was this really in the *satyagrahis*, the ones who participated in these campaigns?

RT: The test of it lies in their action after the British left. This is how I look at it. There were hundreds who abstained from power, who went on working as Vinobaji did, as Sri Ravishankar Maharaj did, as others did! They have refused to end it there, and they have gone on doing their work. I consider them to be real *satyagrahis*, those who followed Bapu as soldiers. And there were those who were honest enough to tell Bapu that really they couldn't accept his non-violence, his *ahimsa*. They accepted it as a technique because violence was out of question. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was quite frank about this. I think Kripalaniji was also quite frank about it, and there were many. I honour them but I do not consider them real *satyagrahis*. They were, so to speak, soldiers by compulsion. They were soldiers because there was no other way of fighting. Non-violence is the only technique, it was the only weapon and they used whatever weapon was available against the British. But they fought against the British, they didn't fight so much against what is wrong. Now, wrong is wrong, whether it is in somebody whom I am fighting, or whether it is in my own people, or whether it is in me. They gave up fighting against the wrong when the British left.

FJB: You still are in the realm of the great leaders, like Kripalani, Patel and so on. What about the thousands of *satyagrahis* whose names will never be known?

RT: They are the real *satyagrahis*, because they really surrendered to truth. They are those, for example, great ones

like Saifuddin Kitchlu. Gandhiji was asked by somebody, ‘Gandhiji, what is the difference between you and Jawaharlal Nehru?’ Gandhiji was nobody’s fool, although people thought he was. He fooled many by allowing them to think he was. Bapu said, ‘The difference between Jawaharlal Nehru and myself is that I say, “Let anglicisation go. I don’t mind if the British remain.” Nehru says, “Let the British go. I don’t mind if anglicisation remains”. ‘Now, the whole of the Nehru rule is an anglicisation whereas the whole of Bapu’s *satyagraha* was in the direction of bringing Bharat back to Bharat, back to the spiritual values, back to the cultural values, back to the linguistic freedom, back to Bharat. So the difference between the two men is Bapu’s ‘Back to Bharat’ and Nehru’s ‘Quit India’.

Bapu completely concentrated on the *Bharatiya* people. He wasn’t concerned whether the British went or stayed, he was concerned with the freedom—spiritual, mental, intellectual, moral, and social freedom of the *Bharatiya* people. He was concerned with bringing about a right technique of living for the *Bharatiya* people, in the context of *Bharatiya* conditions. So he concentrated on food. What kind of food *satyagrahis* should eat, or what kind of food *Bharatiyas* should eat? He experimented with food. What was the cheapest and the most nourishing food? That was part of *satyagraha*. Then he said no colour, for two reasons. Because coloured *saris* draw attention, also they cost money, so spin and weave your own cloth and wear it, and let it be the uniform of *satyagraha*. And for years it was. Psychologically this did a lot of harm.

FJB: In which way?

RT: Colours are very necessary. The vibration of colours is very necessary for all-round health. Something in the *Bharatiya* woman was destroyed because we are a people of colour, of music, of dance and song, and some joyousness, some gaiety, was destroyed in us. But then, that was bound to happen. Many things are destroyed in a soldier when trained for battle. They have to be, that can't be helped. But it was all part of *satyagraha*. His attitude towards Ba, Ba's wearing glass bangles, it was all part of *satyagraha*. She was, after all, the leader of the women and if she didn't follow the rules how could Bapu, how could the others be expected to? So what seemed small things weren't small things to Bapu. It was all *satyagraha*, it was all this insistence on truth.

FJB: Yes, but doesn't this pose a problem? Because truth does include colour, if I may put it that way.

RT: Oh yes. But you see, even if you are fighting a crusade, you choose the colour of the soldier's uniform. He isn't allowed to go about in all kinds of coloured clothing. There has to be certain discrimination, and in this we had to deal with policemen. The women, they had to deal with men, they had to work night and day with men, and making themselves attractive would have been a dangerous thing. With colour go the *kumkum* and certain adornments. The whole thing is a complete whole; so the whole thing was discarded. No adornments, no colour, no *kumkum*, nothing. These were soldier women who were preparing for battle, and their battlefield was wherever there was evil.

And if the British were kind enough to arrest them, then the prison house. But these were the two goals of our lives for all those years—fighting what was harmful for our country, no matter in which direction. I was, for example, a very sickly woman, I was in no condition to go to prison and I didn't have the physical courage, and therefore I worked for *swadeshi*.

FJB: In which way did you?

RT: Well, there was the training of the *Bharatiya* mind, to accept the truth that if people want to be free it must be independent in matters of food and clothing, and that this was a very poor country and to spend money on foreign cloth was a sin. So, training men, women and children, on these ideas on the one hand, and fighting the cloth merchants on the other. On the one hand they gave large sums to Gandhiji for this work and on the other imported and secretly sold vast quantities of foreign cloth. So we did *satyagraha* against that. For example, in Patan we did fasting *satyagraha* for three days. I was in hospital in Bombay at the time. I had an operation for displaced septum and I was in the polyclinic when the call came, and I just left and went. The wound hadn't yet healed. And I went to Patan in Gujarat and there we did fasting *satyagraha* for three days.

FJB: What is a fasting *satyagraha*?

RT: Well, we didn't eat for three days. I was sick so they put a cot for me, and I lay down. They either stood or sat in front of the cloth merchants' shops and we just fasted. They turned people away, and they wouldn't let the merchants sell. And then the two great groups in Patan, the *Vaishnav*

and the *Jain* groups, came together and forbade the sale of cloth.

FJB: Yes, that is very good.

RT: As I said, I did not have the courage, I could have gone if I had the courage and the faith. I did not have the faith. Therefore I didn't have the courage to become a *satyagrahi* in the real sense. That is to go and stay in the *ashram*, and to take training in the techniques of *satyagraha* which are quite stiff. No anger, no sense of violence, no sense of bitterness or resentment, no desire to pay back, absolute surrender, no answering violence by violence, insults by policemen, insults by people, insults by officials. Everything needs to be taken in your stride without the least reaction of anger.

FJB: How can you train for that?

RT: Through prayer and preaching, day after day. For example, there is some iniquitous order or the other, and the people rebel and they want to take out a procession against it. The government says there is a curfew and you shall not take out a procession. Of course processions were taken out. Women in hundreds, men in hundreds, children in hundreds. And there are various groups of women leaders for the women and men leaders for the men and teachers and students for the children and so on. It was a most wonderfully organized thing. I can't tell you how beautifully run it was, how wonderfully! We were like one body, thousands upon thousands. We really functioned like one body. It had to be experienced.

FJB: Can you speak about *satyagraha* in which you were involved?

RT: I was in a way involved in all these things, because the people who were involved, I was involved with. For example, a procession is taken out when the police come and say, 'Sisters, please stop this procession, otherwise we will have to stop you.' And the leader says, 'Brother, we are doing our duty and you do yours. You have the perfect liberty to take us away, but we will not stop'. So the policeman apologizes, and sometimes with tears, puts his hand on the woman's wrist and the whole lot follow to prison. Now, in the *satyagraha* which I was involved in, I was made, by an absolute fluke of *karma*, the president of the Youth League of Kadi. There was a Youth League in Baroda; They could not find anyone to be the president. Everybody they chose for president's position was promptly taken off to prison. I was the only person left. They wanted to establish this Youth League, and they wanted to have the first meeting. They could find absolutely nobody. Poor things, they went to Anasuyaben Sarabhai, she was hauled off to prison; they went to Mridula Sarabhai, she was hauled off to prison; they went to several other people; everybody was hauled off to prison. So they asked me and I said, 'Look, I am a sick woman, I will not be able to attend meetings, I am not able to travel; I am practically bedridden. I can't walk without support and I am in no condition to really be responsible for a great movement like this. So please look, and try this one, and that one. But if you can't find anyone, well, I will accept'.

FJB: Did Bapu ask you?

RT: Bapu was in prison.

FJB: Which year was that?

RT: I think this was during the salt *satyagraha* or around that period.

FJB: Early thirties?

RT: Yes. My father was in prison or he wasn't at home. Mother and I went to a Gujarati play. I still remember it. It really was a beautiful play, *Satta-no-Mad*. It was far off in the Vankaner theatre. My mother and I seldom go, but that night we were feeling well enough and we went. At 12 O'clock during the recess, I was told by some official of the theatre that a man is waiting outside and insists on speaking to me. I went out. It was the Secretary of the Youth League of Kadi, or Yuvak Sangh. He was tired, dirty, hungry, and unkempt.

He said, '*Bahen*, I have come to beg you, you must be president, there is no other name. I have come all the way from Kadi. From the station I went straight to your house. From the house I have come straight here. I have not eaten, I have not drunk, I have not bathed, I have not changed my clothes. You can see the condition I am in, but I will not go back until I have your promise that you will'.

So I said, 'But look, Gaman, look at my own condition.'

He said, 'I don't care what your condition is. You will just have to consider being our president'.

So I said, 'Alright, if it's like that'.

He said, 'Now we are not going to run after anyone else, good or bad. Whether you can do it or not, whether you can attend or not, you are going to be our president. We are now sick and tired of running around'.

I said, 'Alright'.

That is how I became president of the Yuvak Sangh.

Now the first *satyagraha* that we were going to do was in Kadi. There was the meeting and a tremendous youth conference. It was really a very fine affair. From there I went off to Bombay to have my operation, or very soon thereafter. My father was in King Edwards Hospital for an operation of the same sort. He had three operations, and my mother was there with him. I was in the polyclinic. I had promised Gaman, the Secretary, that the moment *satyagraha* started I would come no matter where I was, or what condition I was in.

The first *satyagraha* was organized against the *Kapadias*, the cloth traders of Patan. The cloth trade of Patan was very famous. They make a special kind of cloth in Patan which is called *Patan ka patola*. It is made nowhere else. The weaving is absolutely miraculous and it was sold for a thousand rupees there. *Ranis* and very rich people bought it. It was a rich man's cloth, like cloth of gold, or something like that. It was a very decorative trade for Patan. They also sold foreign stuff, from Liverpool and Manchester and so on and so forth. This is what we wanted to stop, because this had completely destroyed our own cloth trade.

They were making preparations for *satyagraha*. They were talking to the cloth merchants. I was in the polyclinic and had my operation. I was very weak, so the doctor asked me to stay for a few days more. The letter came from Patan saying they were starting the *satyagraha*, and wanted me to go at once.

My father was lying in a very serious condition in King Edward Hospital. I knew if he knew that I had gone off

to *satyagraha*, in the midst of my treatment, it would give him such a shock that he might not recover. So I went off to Patan that night without telling anybody. It was a very dramatic affair, Fred. When I reached Patan, I heard that Patan was divided into two camps. There was the great *Vaishnav* community with its leader, and there was the great *Jain* community with its leader. For thousands of years these two city fathers, the leaders of the *Vaishnav*, and *Jain* communities had managed Patan affairs beautifully. It had gone on for centuries. For the last twenty years there was conflict between the two communities. Or, perhaps, it was a personal conflict between the two leaders. But whatever it was, for twenty years they had not talked. The result was that if anything had to be done in Patan, if the *Vaishnav* leader said, 'yes, we will do it', the *Jain* leader would say 'no'. And if the *Jain* leader said 'yes, we will do it', the *Vaishnav* leader said 'no'. So nothing was done in Patan. It was a stalemate and had been there for twenty years. Unless these two leaders told their various merchants to stop selling foreign cloth, foreign cloth would go on being sold and nothing could be done about it. Finally, I don't know how it was managed, these two leaders came to see me.

FJB: While you were there?

RT: Yes, I was president of the Youth League, you see.

FJB: Was the Youth League involved in the selling?

RT: The Youth League was managing the *satyagraha*, and they came to see me. It was really tweedledum and tweedledee. Or rather it wasn't. Tweedledum and tweedledee were both round and short, but while the *Vaishnav*

leader was round and short, the *Jain* leader was tall and thin. They came, and by Allah's grace, for the first time in twenty years, they talked in a friendly fashion and they decided to cooperate. And the atmosphere in Patan that day had to be felt to be believed. The whole city was in a kind of a uproar of joy. I can't tell you, because for twenty years all the affairs of Patan had been rotting, and nothing could be done. Now that the two leaders had decided to work together it meant that the affairs of the whole city would come alive again.

FJB: For how long has this *satyagraha* gone on?

RT: Oh, it had not even begun yet.

FJB: I see.

RT: *Satyagraha* could only begin if the merchants refused to lock up after the conferences, after the talks and so on. If they refused to stop the sale, then only *satyagraha*, until then there were talks. So there were talks with the leaders, and the leaders talked with the merchants, and when we were told that the merchants refused, the whole city, including little toddlers of two and a half years, went into fast. There was this little child of two-and-a-half who refused to take a drink of water every day.

FJB: You mean the merchants refused after the *Jain* and the *Vaishnav* had come to an agreement?

RT: Yes, the two leaders came to an agreement, they spoke to their various merchants, but the merchants refused. They said, 'No, this is trade, and trade can't be interfered with. It is our livelihood'. So the whole city went into *satyagraha*,

except the officials. The officials were a little band of out-castes, so to speak. They put a cot before the shop. Wherever we took our stand, that shop was closed, the shopkeeper never appeared. For three days this went on and, on the third day, the merchants got together to decide.

It was a rainy night, and I remember perfectly well the whole of Patan had gathered, thousands of people, women with little children in their laps, sitting in the rain. And they sat in the rain the whole night singing *bhajans*, making speeches, and talking. Not very far away were the merchants sitting in conference. And the *Jain* and *Vaishnav* leaders were with us. I can't tell you what a dramatic time it was. The whole night, I think, from 9 O'clock till about 4 or 5 in the morning, they went on and they never knew the time. It was raining, and messengers went back and forth between the leaders and the merchants. And finally at about 4 O'clock or half past four, the merchants gave in and promised to stop the sale. And it is quite indescribable—the atmosphere, the joy of the people, and there was no hurrying and hustling.

We were absolutely silent with joy, and we just broke into *bhajans* or something like that. There was no shouting or clapping. It was a most wonderful atmosphere, a most spiritual atmosphere. And then the next day we feasted. And I fell very ill. My parents came to know about this afterwards.

In the meanwhile I was faced with a very great temptation. While we were preparing for the *satyagraha*, a Patan man, who had been released from Vellore jail, came to see me. He wept and he said, 'We are losing (our reputation) completely because you people from outside should come

and do *satyagraha* and we the people of Patan, shouldn't be able to manage this affair. Give us time, please postpone your *satyagraha* and give us time'.

He took off his turban and put it at my feet, and said, 'Your father is lying ill there, if anything happens to you, what is going to be his condition? What is going to be the condition of your old mother? And we will be responsible. Please, please give us time'.

And I said, 'Alright'.

And I can't tell you, Fred, the restlessness that came upon me then. Not for one moment did I have peace. Intellectually speaking I was quite right. The people of Patan should have a chance to manage this affair themselves, and we shouldn't be uppity saying, 'No, we will do your job for you'. But it wasn't right, I had given my promise. And then an episode came to my mind where my father had promised to attend a certain meeting in Nadiad. Another very big meeting of all *Bharatiyas* of importance was taking place in Ahmedabad that same day. Father was asked by Madhavbhai Desai to be there, because some Muslim leader had to be there. And father said, 'But I have promised to be in Nadiad'. So there was a little tussle between Madhavbhai and the Nadiad friend and father said finally, 'I really don't know what is right, I am going to ask Bapu'.

And Bapu was spinning, with all the leaders sitting around. He had been listening to the controversy. Father goes and stands near Bapu, and asks, 'Bapu, what shall I do, you tell me'.

Bapu looks up, '*Vachan diya hai?* (You have given your promise?)'

Father said 'yes'.

'*Jao* (go)'.

No question of this is a big meeting, more important meeting, and that's just nothing at all. You have given your promise, go. So father said, 'All right, I am going.'

And then the Nadiad gentlemen said, 'No Bapu, this is a very important meeting and some Muslim leader should be there with Bapu.' And Bapu said, 'We release you, we will find somebody else.' So he had it both ways. But this came to my mind as I was pacing up and down the verandah, in a state of utmost agitation and turmoil, and suddenly Bapu's words came, '*Vachan diya hai, jao* (You have given your promise, go.)'

And I made up my mind. I have given a promise and it is not for me now to sit thinking and making decisions. The Patan people should have thought of this before. No, I have given a promise, I can't go back. It will be letting the Youth League down. All preparations have been made. And just as I came to this conclusion, Gaman came in. He said, '*Bahen*, my heart is broken'.

I said, 'Stop, Gaman. We will go on with the *satyagraha*, I have decided'.

This is the kind of thing that used to happen.

FJB: Now, can you tell me a little bit more about how you were part, either directly or indirectly, of the movements of freedom, of various *satyagrahas*?

RT: It was one movement with many incidents, as there is one war, one world war, with many little fights going on at various places, attacks and defences. Ever since we joined

Bapu, this was very soon, within a year or two, after he had returned from Africa, *Babajan* gave himself completely to Bapu, and I was Bapu's as much as I could be. My mother, like most women, cooperated heart and soul with my father, and her sacrifice, like that of most women, was far greater than his.

FJB: In which way?

RT: He was already 65 years old. He retired when he was 65. When he joined Bapu he must have been well over 65. He was 75 when he went to prison twice. All our clothes, the richest clothes, silks, velvets, satins, gold, silver, all were burnt.

FJB: When?

RT: During the *satyagraha*. When we took to *khadi* we burnt all that. What was the idea in keeping them? We had committed ourselves to *khadi*, and what would be the idea of keeping these silks and satins? On the one hand, we were talking of *khadi*, and on the other hand, how could we cherish all those foreign stuff? Therefore, everything was burnt. And this happened throughout Bharat, huge bonfires with the richest clothing. No, we didn't burn furniture. I think people sold those off. But clothing, all cloths except *khadi* were burnt. And I will tell you the state of consciousness. I think my mother suffered, but she never showed it.

FJB: She suffered because she had to give up these things?

RT: She suffered because she was in this because of my father. It wasn't her own decision, it was my father's decision, and it was my decision. My mother cooperated. She

cooperated as a soldier's wife does. She suffered terribly, but she never allowed anyone to know it.

This is one of the most remarkable things in history. Thousands of men were taken away to prison. Immediately the women of Gujarat, including my old mother, came out and took up the work of men. Starting with managing the various *ashrams*, they did wonderful work. And it shows that college or school education isn't necessary at all, for training in the real qualities. Here were these village women completely ignorant, and the work that they did under Ba's guidance and leadership! Oh! Here we were, extremely mid-Victorian and very formal, and my mother a very sick woman of over 60, and myself a very sickly young woman, wandering in the villages! And now when I think back upon it, I don't know how we lived through that time. The consciousness was in such a state of freedom that it really wasn't in the body at all. Everything was automatic; we did the most unbelievable things automatically.

FJB: Like, for example? What kind of unbelievable things?

RT: We were Muslim women, and we had many formal habits. We were very private about our things. For us to go out and sit in the fields to ease ourselves, as we had to do when we went to the villages, there is no privacy at all. Men and women slept in one room, one latrine for fifty people or more, and the men and women going off, completely unselfconscious and completely bodyless, so to speak. They wanted to ease themselves, they went, sat in the fields, eased themselves, and came back. The consciousness is not involved in this at all. I have now come to realize, more and more, to what heights of *yogic* greatness

Bapu had reached. That his consciousness was able to take hold of our consciousness, and take it to a place which was unimaginable—absolutely. How we lived through all those years is, stretched out it came to about 40, I don't know. It never occurred to us that we were doing anything strange. Thousands and thousands were doing it. We were all doing it together, nobody standing out, nobody unique, and nobody concerned with whether they were praised or not. I mean, really it was a *yogic* state and it was due completely and wholly to Bapu.

FJB: To what extent was it a state of consciousness that could possibly be maintained over long periods of time?

RT: You see, there were three kinds of people. There were those with whom it was not so much a matter of consciousness as of conscience. For example, people like Kripalaniji, or Jawaharlal Nehru, or Sardhar Vallabhbhai Patel and others. They were not in a state of consciousness; they had chosen that path deliberately because there was no other path. The proof that for them it was not a state of consciousness is that the moment the British went, these people's consciousness changed. Mine didn't, and the consciousness of thousands of others didn't. It remained there, and it is still there; that is my point. Everything has changed in Bharat, but that consciousness which Bapu has aroused in us has not changed, Fred, and we still live with it. That is why Bapu is so close. I can see him smiling at me now. And there are so many—all those who are working in the villages, who are in that same state of consciousness. If you talk to them today, you will find that you are talking to the consciousness of forty or fifty years ago. They have not changed.

FJB: When you spoke about colours, you said it did psychological damage, but that was unavoidable in the struggle. But doesn't that mean that when the struggle is over those aspects that were not allowed to come to life had to come through?

RT: Yes, there were two sorts. There were those to whom this simplicity became second nature. They loved it and they kept it. There were those, especially amongst the young people, who went violently the other way, and their reaction, moral reaction, was violent, and in all ways. Then they were sort of catapulted towards self-indulgence. That did happen.

FJB: On a large basis?

RT: Well, no. At least I am not aware. I know of many who had this reaction, in a strange sort of a way. This struggle was very strange. For example, in my family my father and I gave ourselves up as wholly as we could, *Babajan* completely, and I, as much as my health permitted. *Ammajan* kept the house running very simply as a *satyagrahi* should, with no food stocks, with no cloth, with nothing at all that was foreign. And that meant a complete change of life in eating habits, in wearing habits, in living habits, and in every sort of habit. It meant a complete transformation of life. And the ease with which my mother and other women took these up has given me a very great respect for *Bharatiya* womanhood, for *Bharatiya* values, spiritual and moral, because that was really the test. My mother, or my family, was not unique. She was just one amongst thousands and thousands of them. That is the great thing. That's the glory.

FJB: You were Muslims, were there many Muslims with Gandhiji?

RT: No, I wouldn't say there were many. But there were a good many and they were most notable people of the greatest spiritual eminence such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr Ansari, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlu, and Imam Saheb. And the great thing about Bapu was that the very great saints and *sadhus* accepted him as leader and they accepted him as Guru. For example, we know Vinobaji was already a *yogi* in his own right when he accepted Bapu as his Guru. *Kakasaheb* Kalelkar had already accepted him. In fact, *Kakasaheb* had worn *gerua*, the saffron.

He had worn the saffron robe, that is, he had become a *sanyasi*. And he joined Bapu and took the white *khadi*. And then there was Shri Ravi Shankar Maharaj and so many others, very great saints—they all accepted Bapu as guru. I think that the saintliness or sainthood of a man is to be judged by saints, not by demons. The fact that Bapu was accepted as a very great saint and Mahatma by the cream of the saintly—a taboo word, I think, to call him, merely to lessen his position to that of a diplomat or a statesman, or a loyal nationalist—is very false. First and foremost, this man is a Mahatma of very high order and that's why things happened as they did.

FJB: Why were there not more Muslims with Gandhiji?

RT: Mussalmans wanted power. Muslims wanted to rule as the Mughals had ruled. It must be remembered that the vast majority of Mussalmans in Bharat, like the vast majority of Christians in Bharat, did not change their religion to other religions because of the new religious faith or calling. They became Christians, or Buddhists or Mussalmans

because they wanted to change their social status. They were untouchables, and therefore, they had no love towards the Hindu community. On the contrary, when you consider Pakistan, it has to be taken into consideration that the vast majority of the Mussalmans of Bharat did not enter Islam because they loved Islam. They entered Islam because it was the only way out for them, out of the degradation of untouchability, and out of the degradation of the kind of humiliations that were imposed upon them by the higher castes, especially the *brahmins*.

FJB: So they were not really descendents of the early Mohammedans?

RT: Oh no. Later on many of them became Sufis. There were many here. The Sufis had come, and spread hundreds of years before. Islam, as spread politically, and the Sufi Islamic way as given by the great Sufis, are two entirely different things. The Sufi is quite different from the Mussalman. I am Sufi. I don't call myself Mussalman because I don't believe in and do not belong to the Mussalman sect. But I am Islamic, in that I accept wholeheartedly the blessed tenets of Islam, and the way that I live my way of living, is that of a Muslim monastery.

FJB: I asked you whether these people were not descendents, because they have changed, they became Muslims and Christians to change their social status, rather than as the result of an inner conviction. You said, 'No, they were not, but became later'.

RT: I was talking about those who were converted, who were *shudras*, or of the lower castes, and converted, or

came to Islam in order to improve their social status. But there were others who were Muslims, who had accepted Islam because they loved it, who had become disciples of the great Gurus. That is why I said there were two distinct movements. There were two distinct movements of political conversion for example. There was the movement of political conversion in Christianity. But then there are those who became Christians out of love for Christ as that young Benedictine did, and went in for *yoga* as Susan has done. Now she is really Christian, because they are of Christ and they love Christ.

And the same is the case with the Muslims—those who became Muslims because they loved Islam and are real Muslims, and the others who are Mussalmans. They could have become anything. Any road would have taken them out of that. Again the Mussalmans were in power. The Mughals had been in power. So, on the one hand, there was fear, and on the other, there was greed, and self-interest. So, that kind of political Islam is no Islam at all. It is just conversion and it was abomination. Conversion of that sort is really abomination.

The people who joined Bapu were the real Muslims, people with tremendous spiritual eminence such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlu, Dr Ansari and the two Ali brothers, and most specially their mother Biamman. Oh, what a woman! Then there were so many others. They were men of real spiritual eminence, and they accepted Bapu as a great man. Take, for example, the Sarhad Gandhi, Khan Saheb Abdul Gaffar Khan. He is a towering saint and he accepted Bapu

as guru. He is now in prison, the Pakistanis have put him in prison again.

FJB: Who is that?

RT: He is a Pakhtunistani leader who was the right hand man of Gandhiji as far as the Muslim community was concerned.

FJB: Was he the Frontier Gandhi?

FT: Yes, the Frontier Gandhi. That's right. For many years Pakistan had him in prison. Then he was released some years ago. He came to Bharat. Again now they have put him in prison, because there is great agitation in Pakistan.

FJB: I just want to ask a few more questions about *satyagraha*. You have been with Gandhi and known him for a long stretch of time, for over 30 years. How did his ideas on *satyagraha* develop during that time?

RT: I can only say Fred, in the light of the perspective that I had gained through the years. For one thing, at that time, I say our consciousness was so released that we weren't aware of what was happening; we were like patients under anaesthesia when the operation was taking place. We weren't aware. Things happened. We found ourselves doing things that would have been absolutely impossible, physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, or in every way, they were being done.

FJB: You have already given some examples. But could you just give another, may be?

RT: The burning of clothes, then my father and my mother were at that time the family elders, and were much

respected and looked up to. And when my *Babajan* joined Gandhi, most of the Tyabji family, it was a very large clan, turned against him. They said he was mad, and so on. My mother had to endure all that, quietly. *Babajan* loved her so much and she mattered so much to him that if she had put pressure upon him, he might have given in, but she didn't. She put herself on the cross, and she strengthened him on the cross. And this, I am proud to say, happened in households after households. By Allah's grace my mother is not unique in Bharat. This is my pride in my country; it happened in every household practically, it couldn't have happened otherwise.

I will tell you the story of a woman, a Punjabi. They were saluting the national flag. Every time the flag was put up, the man who went up and put up and unfurled the flag was shot down. This woman had four sons. One son went up, unfurled the flag, was shot down; the second son went up, unfurled the flag, was shot down; and the third; and the fourth.

FJB: By the British?

RT: Yes, and when the fourth son was shot down the woman burst into tears. Somebody went and said, 'But you are highly blessed'.

She said, 'What do you mean? Do you think I am weeping because my sons have given their lives for their country? I am weeping because I have no fifth son to give'.

These are the people whose names never came in the newspapers. Allah be praised, and there are thousands such. This is *satyagraha*, not what these people talk, this is real *satyagraha*.

FJB: And this was due to the inspiration by Gandhi?

RT: Oh, yes. Because the tremendous love for our country was inspired by him. Absolutely, where have we been all these years? For 200 years we have been slaves. Oh, my Bapu! Perhaps it would take several centuries before people realize what light had shone amongst them for all these years.

FJB: When you spoke about the *satyagraha*, the demonstration, you said that the policemen had tears in their eyes.

RT: Yes, very often they had.

FJB: In this situation, I assume it was a policeman or troops that shot down somebody?

RT: The national flag was an emblem of the freedom of Bharat from British domination. The national flag stood for the ending of British rule in Bharat and, therefore, all those who were there were officials. They were very few. But there were officials who resigned their jobs.

FJB: You mean British officials?

RT: Yes, British ICS men and others.

FJB: ICS?

RT: Indian Civil Service. There were *Bharatiya* officials and, in fact, I know Englishmen also who resigned their jobs. They said, 'No, this is unfair and we won't do it. A country is fighting for its freedom, and we will not stop it'. And they just resigned and went.

FJB: That brings me to another question. It is often said that *satyagraha* could only work against the British

in India, but not anywhere else. Could you comment on this?

RT: I don't know, but I think it is probably true.

FJB: In which way?

RT: The British were here in order to rule. There wasn't the kind of deep religious conflict between the British and we like between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. Supposing *satyagraha* was done in Islamic countries, I doubt if it would work. After all, the *ahimsa* of Hazrat Issa, the Christ, did not work against the Roman soldiers who crucified him. Why? Bapu's *ahimsa* had raised our consciousness to such a state. Do you know that when we were hauled off to prisons or lockups for a day, the British Superintendent of the prison asked me to sing *bhajans* for him?

FJB: Now what is this thing?

RT: *Bhajans*. I used to sing *bhajans*, that is songs in praise of the Lord, spiritual songs. We were taken to the lock-up for the day because we took out a procession. He said, 'When you are released', will you come to my office and sing a *bhajan* for me?'

And I said, 'Yes, with pleasure.' Jailers used to come and sit with us and so on. It was a very friendly atmosphere. Bapu, whose consciousness released our consciousness and picked it up, is really the descent of the divine and the ascent of the human. Bapu's *ahimsa*, however, didn't work with Godse. Why? Because Godse himself was obsessed with a spiritual idea. He really believed that Bapu was out to destroy Hinduism in Bharat. The Mussalmans

really believed that the Hindus were out to destroy Islam in Bharat.

FJB: But how could they believe that?

RT: They did. How can the Christians of today believe that the Prince of Peace would approve of nuclear weapons? But they do. They are Christians, but they still believe. Anybody can believe anything if, as long as they believe only what they want to believe. And that is the state of most people, Fred, people believe what they want to believe.

I think that the *satyagraha* movement could only have worked with the British. And for this reason, for one thing, the Britisher is a very objective creature. And while he has an obsession for national glory, which went too far for recognition and so on, world domination is not a religious fanatic.

The Britons, I think, as a rule were not a religious fanatic. Then they are avid for knowledge. They started The East India Company. The British used to sit and dress like the *Bharatiyas*, they used to attend *Bharatiya* gatherings, they became one with the people and they were accepted by the people, and as our people loved them so they also came to have a tender feeling for us. So before *satyagraha* started the British mind was already conditioned in a certain way and our mind was already conditioned in a certain way. We could not have undertaken *satyagraha* against the Portuguese or against the French in the same way.

FJB: But to put it rather sharply isn't that saying that truth only works against the British?

RT: It didn't work against the British, truth worked for the British.

FJB: Yes, but does it mean it worked only if it works only for the British?

RT: Well, as far as our experience goes, yes. I may be quite incorrect, since it has not been tried and it can only be tried if one has a saint, a Mahatma of Bapu's eminence leading the *satyagraha*.

FJB: You feel that is essential?

RT: Absolutely essential. Can you have Christianity without Christ? Can you have Islam without *Huzoor*? Can you have anything without the messenger or the teacher whom Allah has sent? And this mass *satyagraha*, this non-violence on a mass scale, this is really innocence in lieu of religion. It changed the whole life, it changed every aspect of life, it changed all attitudes.

FJB: But you see, to the extent to which it does change all attitudes, it is something that can go on spontaneously?

RT: Yes, and it does go on spontaneously and it is going on spontaneously. But it is going on as a way of life, not as a *jihad* or a struggle against a power that desires to dominate. It can be used as a political weapon in a way, or a weapon for freedom. What *satyagraha* are you to do against bombs? *Satyagraha* can only be practiced. Supposing, for example, the Russians, or the Chinese were ruling here, then *satyagraha* could be practiced against them. Because *satyagraha* means *asahakar*, non-cooperation, the paralyzing of all Government, official activity, by non-cooperation. You can't paralyze bombs. How can you do *satyagraha* against people who are bombing you from the air? *Satyagraha* can only be done against those who are ruling your country and

whom therefore you can paralyze by your non-cooperation. This could only be done against the British because the British were the only people who ruled over Bharat that way. And it was done against the Portuguese, and with very good results, in Goa.

FJB: I would like to read you a statement from a book by Lannoy who in *The Speaking Tree* has a chapter on Gandhi. It is not a whole book on Gandhi but he speaks about *satyagraha* as a dialectic. I think I mentioned it. But he says, 'However, the dialectic of *satyagraha* ultimately rests on the mystical premise that realization of truth mutually liberates both parties and establishes them in love for all'.

RT: It should, not that it does, but that is the idea. If both parties mutually agree that they want this, then it does.

FJB: I like to talk to you a little bit about the deeper background of Gandhi's life and *satyagraha*. First, could you comment on *ahamkara*?

RT: *Ahamkara* is egoism. 'Aham' mean 'I'—the 'I-ness', so *ahamkara* is insistence on the 'I'. *Ahamgrasta* is where a person is completely centred in the ego. *Ahamkara* means just egoism, too much concerned with one's own ego. Because the ego is false, an enemy of truth, the ego has to be fought first. So in *satyagraha*, insistence on truth, the first thing that has to be immolated is the ego.

FJB: Did Gandhiji emphasize this?

RT: Oh, absolutely.

FJB: In which way?

RT: In every way. You must shrink your ego for the good of the country. You must shrink your pleasures for the good of the country. You must simplify your life for the good of the country. The ego was, sort of, flung into the fire of national aspiration. That was the first thing to go because we were so little aware of the ego, because the ego at that time was imprisoned.

FJB: Was it imprisoned or was it subjugated for good?

RT: No, Fred. In many it may have been subjugated for good, because there were many who became really saintly because of this. I can quote so many who became really saintly by following Bapu's technique. So in them one can say, but one can't say for good, because at any moment it might become rampant again. It is Allah who protects, but on the whole one can say that the subjugation of the ego was permanent in them. In others it was imprisoned and when it was free it asserted itself. Young people went in for self indulgence. The ordinary reactions took place, they went in for power.

FJB: What is the opposite of *ahamkara*?

RT: *Sharana bhava*—the power of surrender, of complete surrender, or *atma samarpana*. We have many words because there are many aspects of this subjugation of the ego.

FJB: Which aspects did Gandhiji emphasize most?

RT: In prayer, and I hope Bapu corrects me, I feel him very close, complete surrender—*sharana bhava*. In action, *dasbhava yantrabhava*, that is to say, *bhakti*, the devotion

of a servant, and *yantrabhava*, that is, just becoming an instrument in the hands of the Lord. And, in fact, his language very often was like that. When he spoke of the inner voice that is precisely what he meant. He would go off, fast, and practice very stiff austerities. And he would be vouchsafed the way. And he would come out and just start, and then nothing held him back. Once the power of the Lord came upon him, he got the orders from his Master, and the whole lot of us after. It was like that for years.

FJB: For many years?

RT: Yes, for all the *satyagraha* period.

FJB: But the *satyagraha* period lasted for over 20 years.

RT: Oh yes, throughout that time.

FJB: When one speaks in the West about these things, it is usually said that in the East, or let us say in India, there is not enough regard for the person or for the individual. It is much more an attempt to submerge in the all, so to speak, and losing one's individual identity rather than preserving it.

RT: That is so.

FJB: What does that really mean when you say you want to lose your personal identity?

RT: My understanding is of my stage in evolution. According to that I may be right, but at a higher stage I could be wrong, at a lower stage I would be wrong. So I am speaking for my own stage of evolution. At this stage of evolution I would say that we are a people of devotion, and love is self-abnegation, self-forgetfulness. We are a people of love,

we are a people of devotion. It is not that we don't go after power, but as a nation we are a people of devotion and for us, therefore, *ishk ho Allah, Allah ho ishk* (*Ishk* is Allah and Allah is *ishk*). *Ishk* is love, divine love, *Prembhakti*. He, the ultimate *Premavatar*, *Premsakshat*, He is love manifest. And the whole idea is to lose your self in that love like Gandhi's life. The end of all knowledge is for us the merging of human consciousness in the divine consciousness. And that can only be done through love. As long as there is the awareness of knowledge, the awareness of power, the awareness of action, ego is there.

FJB: But the merging, is it like salt dissolving in the ocean?

RT: I think after that stage of final mergence has been reached, there is no Raihana, but until then it is periodical. That is to say people are in *samadhi* and then they come back, to their own personalities. In *samadhi*, in fact, people have been burnt and they have not known. You shout their name, they don't know, they are not aware. There is no awareness of the body or of personality or what it is, I don't know, because it is not my experience. But I do know that this is my own path that of this mergence, merging in love.

FJB: Your own path?

RT: Yes, my own path is that of *bhakti*, the path of merging. Therefore, it is very easy for me to accept people like me. In fact *satyagraha* could only be practiced in Bharat, and the proof of that is that it has only been practised in Bharat because we are such kind of people.

FJB: How would you describe such kind of a people?

RT: For one thing, we are a unique people. This is a unique country. Our umpteen senses work. It doesn't, for example, startle me at all to see Bapu here or feel the presence of Hazrat Issa, the Christ, or to feel the presence of Lord Zarathustra. This world is part of that world, and that world is in this world, and we take it with complete naturalness. We don't make a song and dance about it. We live in that world and in this world. So when a tremendous thing like *satyagraha* is put before us, our consciousness is able to open out to the divine forces, and then they are able to use us. How, for twenty years, was the consciousness of thousands and thousands of people so lifted up that they were not aware? For twenty years they remained unaware. Who was that who went to sleep for a hundred years? We were in that kind of a state. How? After all, we had to live, we had to eat, we had to drink. We were very often sick, we had to be hospitalized, we were very often in prison, our children were very often starving. All these things happened to us, and it just didn't touch our consciousness. Our consciousness had gone beyond. We knew these things and we just didn't bother. Now, how did this happen? Because we are a unique people and because Bapu, I would now say without any hesitation whatsoever, was one of the greatest *yogis* that has ever lived. It is because his tremendous, incalculable *yogic* power took hold of whatever *yoga* was in us, and took us up.

FJB: But when you speak about Bapu as a presence, he must have preserved some identity.

RT: Oh, yes. There are two Bapus. There is Bapu, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who functioned as a

human being. And then there was our own very special, very particular Bapu, that tremendous illumined *yogic* consciousness. And that, for us, is just as real, and dear, as the other, and that has remained. That is why there is no parting from Bapu.

FJB: I ask this in connection with the merging with the infinite, with God. I mean, if he had merged completely?

RT: Oh no, oh no, he didn't. He was not meant to; he was not meant to merge. Allah has sent him for a certain purpose, and it was not for him to go off into *samadhi*. It was for him to free the country from very degrading slavery.

FJB: But now I see he is with God.

RT: No, his work is not finished, Fred. He is working. In fact, his power is growing more and more, just as the power of Hazrat Issa, the Christ, is growing more and more. If you look for it among Christians you won't find it, look for it everywhere and you will.

FJB: You mean you won't find what, when you say 'it'?

RT: I am talking of the Christ consciousness, or the Christ power. If you look for it only amongst the Christian community you might not find so much, because the Christians have become so Christian. They have shut themselves off from Christ. But those who are open; for example, did you not find Christ here? That is what I mean, He is everywhere, He belongs to everybody, and wherever He is loved, wherever He is accepted, wherever He is revered, there He is, and He works.

FJB: Well, I still have some question in my mind for trying really to understand the idea of a complete merging.

RT: This is not something that I can tell you, Fred. Because, once the drop has dissolved in the ocean, does it come back? Can it talk about itself? Who is to talk? Therefore, to him, from him, to whom that knowledge has come, that knowledge does not return, because he is dissolved. He is a drop that is dissolved in the ocean. Now who is to talk?

FJB: But can you be in communion with a person who has become one with God?

RT: Well, you see there are stages and stages of becoming one with Him. As I say we have these periodic periods. For example, Sri Ma Anandmai. Of all living beings that I know, of all the living saints that I know that is embodied—they are all living but embodied in human form—she is, in my consciousness, and beyond comparison, the greatest. And she is lost, I mean, she lives in that consciousness. Now I am very often, by Allah's grace, in communion with her, but when I am in communion with her it is in order to ask certain questions. For example, her disciples come here. The questions that they are not able to get to her, since she hasn't got time, or she isn't in Delhi, and their questions are harassing and have to be answered. Then they come here. Ma appears and sometimes for hours she explains to them. When she is explaining, or when I am in communion with her, and I very often am by Allah's grace, then it is not the Sri Ma whose consciousness has dissolved, it is the person Sri Ma Anandmai. What question would I ask the drop that has dissolved in the ocean? So when she

is in *samadhi*, for days she is completely in *samadhi*, for days her body is a corpse. She may return, she may return after days, she may return after hours. Three days non-stop *samadhi* is quite common. Now at that time nobody is in communion. Naturally she isn't there, and she mustn't be touched and nobody must go near her, because upon the slightest touch she might die of the shock. So the body has to be very carefully looked after at such a time. And, in fact, I think that when Hazarat Issa was away for all those years he was really in such a state.

FJB: I would like to ask you another question about the experience of time. Gandhiji, on the one hand, is very close to the eternity of time. And yet, in his daily life there is a kind of punctuality, almost rationalism.

RT: This is also highly *yogic*, this power to live in two states of consciousness at once. On the one hand he lived in eternity and this is how he is able to function, this is how *Huzoor* was able to function. An absolute unadulterated hell like Arab was converted into a comparative paradise in twenty years. This is the work that is allotted to Lord Mohammed, and it was done. How? This is precisely what has helped many of us to understand what happened in Arabia with our own great teacher and messenger of Allah. And in fact, it is living with Bapu day after day. In fact, my brother-in-law, a member of the ICS, said to me, 'Raihana, I have often wondered what it must have been like to live day after day with a great prophet'. Now I understand. Bapu has helped us to understand our own *Huzoor* because they are so similar. He lived in many states of consciousness at once.

FJB: You say this is a *yogic* consciousness?

RT: Oh, highly *yogic*.

FJB: But some people say that this is the result of his Western background, that he has this punctuality.

RT: Oh, the punctuality? Yes, his sense of time, certainly. But that simultaneous sense of timelessness and this punctuality, the two of them working simultaneously, without interfering with each other, or without making hay of his consciousness, this was highly *yogic*. You see, people refused to take him as a *yogi*. I will give you a little example.

Ba, in her own right, was a *yogini*. When her body was burning—she suffered from dropsy, so her body wouldn't burn—and the sandalwood which had been reserved for Bapu was used for Ba. For twenty-four hours her body wouldn't burn. The heat was so great, that for twenty-four hours nobody could go near the fire. When the heat had subsided somewhat, they went and looked in the ashes. She had four frail glass bangles, the sign of unbroken marital blessedness of wifeness. Do you know, they hadn't even melted. I saw them. There they were in those terrible flames on her wrist, and they hadn't even melted. One was with Manu Gandhi and she showed it to me, one was with Prabhavatibehn Jayaprakash Narayan, and two were with Sushila Nayar. She said, 'But how can it happen that the glass did not burn?' And she took one of those bangles, which is really a national possession, and put it in the fire, and of course it melted. This was told to me by Prabhavatibehn Narayan in 1956, and she spoke with anger.

FJB: You mean, she burnt it afterwards; it didn't burn when Ba was...

RT: Oh, no.

FJB: It was taken off?

RT: Oh yes. It was taken off and one was... because these people had served.

FJB: But what did she want to prove by burning it?

RT: I don't know what she wanted to prove. I lose my temper completely, I lose myself when I think of it. That was a very great national possession and do you know that none of these people have the moral courage to speak of this. It isn't modern, it won't be believed, they will be laughed at, so the truth mustn't be told.

FJB: This is miraculous thing that these arm bands would not burn.

RT: This is how they are, Fred. I am very fed up with this whole lot to tell you the truth.

FJB: You mean because they do not say it?

RT: No, I mean because they are the kind of people that they are. And they differed between the atmosphere that we have been with Bapu, and this atmosphere that these power worshippers, money worshippers, chair worshippers, have created. It is something so unbearable that in 1956, or about the end of 1955, I felt myself at the end of my tether; I felt I was going mad. With the erosion of these people whom I had loved, believed and trusted, revered for all these years, the way I saw them falling! And when I saw

what was happening in Bharat and then this Nehru rule, I prayed. I said, 'Allah, I don't want to commit suicide, but how am I to live in this atmosphere? I can't do worship, I can't do my *sadhana*. I am obsessed with pain at what is happening and I cannot be out of Bharat for a day. So how am I to live? Give me the courage to live through this'. And on my birthday, 26 January 1956, my *Huzoor* gave me a birthday gift. He said, 'If this condition persists, and if you find you are unable to do your *sadhana* in this atmosphere, release from your body will be vouchsafed to you in 1960'. And for four years it was the hope of death that gave me the courage to live. By 1960, we had got out of a certain stage, and we were now in another stage which was much more hopeful and constructive.

FJB: You feel that you are now in this country in a more hopeful stage?

RT: Well, it was never in a hopeless state, but I was in a state of intense agony. I had no fear of the ultimate destiny of Bharat but I really didn't see how I could live through, how my nerves would be able to bear the awful agony of watching everything that I had believed in, everything that we had worked for, crumbling to dust.

FJB: What do you mean by that?

RT: We had worked for simplicity; we had worked for freedom from anglicisation and westernisation. We had worked for our own culture, for our own language, for our own ways. And what happened? The Nehru government took us by the scruff of our necks and said, 'You shall become Westerners. No progress except in the West'. And so our

habits destroyed, our things destroyed, you can't find the kind of utensils you had, you can't find the kind of cloth that you had, you can't find anything of Bharat. In order to live at all in this Nehru-created Bharat you have to be a Westerner. This is what I am not able to accept.

FJB: Yes, I understand what you mean. I would like to come back to the Eastern worldview, and there is one question that I think is very important to understand Gandhiji. It is often said that in the West we experience the opposites in a very sharp way—good and evil, black and white—but in the East, in India, it is not so much experienced as opposites, like the lotus flower grows out of the mud, good comes out of evil, and so on.

RT: Absolutely. You see, with us there is no difference between the mud and the lotus. They are both forms of the same life. The fact that the lotus comes out of the mud shows that there is a basic unity between the lotus and the mud. And therefore, for us, there isn't that sharp distinction, as if something quite different belonging to two different worlds, between the mud and the lotus. The mud, so to speak, is the womb of the lotus, and they cannot think of the two as separate. Now you spoke of redemption, and I said my word would be spiritual health, but they are identical. And I was thinking over this, and I think it answers your question. We don't have the idea of redemption because we don't have that kind of idea of sin. We have words for good and evil, but with us our good is not the English good, and our evil is not the English evil. We have *avidya*, ignorance.

FJB: Evil is ignorant?

RT: Evil is ignorant, and therefore, nothing is either good or bad in itself. It's put very clearly in *Heart of a Gopi*. 'Nothing is evil, until one makes it so by thinking of it as such'. For example, in prison I learnt this lesson. If you ask about prison life, it was prison fare, it was prison conditions, and I have never known such freedom until then, as I did in Nagpur prison. How did this happen? It happened because I wasn't thinking of it as a prison house at all. For me it was the centre of freedom; it was the temple of freedom. So my own mind rejected the idea of prison, and so, I wasn't in prison. And this happened to all of us, all of us, during the whole of *satyagraha*. People said they have gone to prison but they didn't feel they had been in prison.

FJB: And how do you feel this is related to the good–evil opposites?

RT: People think that being in prison is a bad thing, prison fare is bad fare, prison conditions are bad conditions. But when we didn't think of them as bad, they weren't bad. The food came in very dirty pails and we ate for a year without feeling sick or without feeling disgusted.

FJB: Which year were you in prison?

RT: 1942–43

FJB: The Quit India Movement?

RT: Yes, I went to prison thrice, twice in Bombay.

FJB: Twice, during the Quit India Movement?

RT: Yes.

FJB: But isn't there still in every day life an opposition of good and evil?

RT: There is, in consciousness, but not in belief. In experience there is, but knowledge and discrimination does not accept it as reality.

FJB: When you say in consciousness, do you mean in everyday experience?

RT: Yes, exactly. For example, for years we had been warning these people that if they didn't look to the electric wiring in this house there would be a fire one day. And they just refused to listen, and one day there was a fire. It was on my birthday two years ago and it was Shamshir who put that fire out, under the guidance of Allah. It would be called a bad thing. It was really a very good thing. The results were very good.

FJB: In which way were they good?

RT: For one thing, the whole wiring which should have been changed much earlier was changed. Things that these people were not prepared to accept were accepted. Things that these people weren't prepared to do, were done, very necessary things. And those things not being done put the whole institution and all these three buildings, particularly this building, in very great danger and they were just not taking any notice. We were warning them again and again. They were taking no notice, and then there was this fire, of which they had been warned for two years running, and that gave them a jolt. So there is a double consciousness, the thing as it is happening and immediately the mind begins to think of the results that will accrue. Do you see?

So you look at the mud, you accept the mud as mud, but you are also seeing the lotus in the mud. This is what I mean. We have no word for despair, because despair is the finality of hopelessness and for those who believe in *karma* there is no such thing. Everything is subject to change and therefore everything is subject to improvement.

FJB: So this really means the awareness of the possibility of transformation?

RT: Exactly. Everything is *maya*, that which is true at one moment and not true at another, that which is subject to change, is *maya*. So all conditions which are very bad, are subject to change, like, for example, the Indira Government. Even that we take as *maya*, and therefore we are able to live without going mad.

FJB: When Gandhi writes about soul force and brute force, or in his writing on *brahmacharya* he identifies the body with the evil and the soul with the good. I feel that the way he talks about that, there must have been in him a very strong experience of a sexuality divorced from feeling and warmth.

RT: Yes, I think there was. And I think that this was very necessary also, otherwise he could not have freed our consciousness from certain things as he was able to do. For twenty years, for example, men went to prison and their wives worked with other men, whose wives may have gone to prison or were at home, or were managing other *ashrams*. And according to us, due to past life knowledge and acquaintance, love grew up, very deep love between a wife whose husband was in prison or whose husband was

working elsewhere, and the husband whose wife was elsewhere. This became quite common, and their way of dealing with it was, the wife told her husband and the husband told his wife, and the four of them got together and they said, 'But what is wrong with this feeling? What is wrong with this love? We accept it, provided there is no wrong action.' And the woman tied a *rakhi* to the man and became his sister. And I have known so many such couples who have become true brothers and sisters. This was due to Bapu's training. This purification was due to *bramacharya* practised in the *ashram*, to *brahmacharya* attitude practised in the *ashrams*, to the overcoming of the awareness of the body. This was, I would say, certainly due to Bapu's training.

FJB: Again when you use the word training, can you say a little more how people were trained?

RT: Well, for one thing you mustn't do anything, you mustn't wear anything, you mustn't eat anything, or you mustn't read anything which stimulates sexual passion. You mustn't go into company, you mustn't indulge in talk, you mustn't indulge in gossip, which stimulates sexual curiosity or any sort of sensuality. To every woman, every man except her husband is either father, brother or son, according to age. And to every man, all women except his wife, are his mother, sisters, or daughters. And I have known, except for neurotic cases, as I said, on the whole, the attitude of those who had been trained under Bapu had made them, on the whole, very healthy in these particular things. Mind you, they had given rise to other neurosis, but in this particular matter they had certainly become very much less aware of their body than the generality of women or

the generality of men. And this is how they were able to work, this is how one woman, amongst twenty men, going around everywhere, and so on and so forth. Not a breath of scandal.

FJB: But there is still a question left. I see this in terms of different levels of consciousness.

RT: Yes.

FJB: I feel there is a level of consciousness that you just described and, in which, there is really, I don't like the word sublimation, but transformation of sexuality. But I can also see a level of experience where sexuality is being cut off from feeling. I don't know whether it makes any sense to you. I wonder whether this was true for Bapu that he got into this child marriage. It was in a traditional marriage. And he describes this in his autobiography very clearly, he was overcome by lust, but not with a feeling accompanied.

RT: It was quite physical.

FJB: Quite physical?

RT: And this is the general experience in Bharat for us. This is what I meant, when I was talking of this passion of tenderness. Because lust is divorced from feeling. Therefore, even when the wife has outgrown physical passion she can satisfy her husband by a passionate tenderness. And this is so with us. The physical feeling is cut off from the emotional, and in fact, we do it quite deliberately with *mantra* and so on. So that what arises here in the lower *kosha* does not reach the emotions, or mind, or does not vitiate our spiritual wealth. It remains where it is and it is dealt with there, and we overcome there.

FJB: You say this is typical for India?

RT: I think so. I think it is.

FJB: But in which way?

RT: It's a *brahmacharya* technique.

FJB: In which way do you feel this makes the tenderness you speak about?

RT: The woman loves her husband with all her *kosha*, with her heart, with her mind, with her soul. And she loves him with such passion that that passion of love, of pouring herself into him, infuses her whole body, and the result is that she is able to give physical satisfaction without feeling physical passion. And this is how we have such happy middle-aged couples in Bharat, quite satisfied.

FJB: Yes. I understood you saying that what is typical is that the physical functions separated from feelings and emotions.

RT: No, not the physical function. The physical urge, that is to say, lust, is separated from love. You can have lust for somebody without having any love for them.

FJB: Yes.

RT: You can love somebody without having any lust for them.

FJB: Yes.

RT: This is what I mean.

FJB: But shouldn't the two beings come together?

RT: They should, then it isn't lust.

5

Dada Dharmadhikari

SHANKAR TRIMBAK DHARMADHIKARI (1899–1985), popularly known as Dada Dharmadhikari, was an independent thinker, a much-respected freedom fighter, an excellent commentator on Gandhian philosophy, an outstanding writer and an effective orator.

He studied at the Indore Christian College, Indore and the Morris College, Nagpur, but did not complete his formal education as he left college to join the Non-cooperation Movement. He taught at Tilak Vidyalyaya at Nagpur from 1931 to 1935. He lived in Wardha from 1935 to 1946 and was connected with the Gandhi Seva Sangh and edited its organ *Sarvodaya* from 1938 to 1943. He had made an in-depth study of the Indian as well as the Western philosophy. His quest for knowledge continued all his life with his reading, writing and his distinct way of thinking.

He had taken part in all the major movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi and had faced consequent imprisonments. His wife, Damayantibai had also taken part in

the freedom struggle. He was a member of the Provincial Legislative Assembly of the Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh) and later also of the Constituent Assembly.

He was a close associate of Gandhi and later of Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan. He was actively connected with the Bhoodan and Sarvodaya movements. He was the president of Kaladi (Kerala) Sarvodaya Sammelan in 1957. He delivered many thought-provoking lectures and wrote many books conveying his original ideas in a style free from jargon. He enjoyed popularity and respect from all the sections of the society but did not get involved in any political game and never coveted any position of power. Early in life he had made a conscious decision to shun wealth, positions of power and titles. He always declined invitations to accept honorary degrees or awards or political positions because he wanted to remain an unlabelled common man.

He devoted his time in studying and propagating Gandhi's ideas in the contemporary context. Away from narrow precincts of any ideology, party, religion, sect or group, he propounded and propagated his views in a transparent, logical and evolving way. He visualized a democracy with a pronounced sense of citizenship and argued against the hold of castes and communalism, chauvinism of language and provinces as well as discrimination based on gender. He opposed the customs and traditions that demean humanity in the name of religion and advocated the principles of social equality and wanted equal opportunities for all. His journey of independent thinking continued all his life, and yet he was never alienated from the people;

he remained involved with their life, their problems and their miseries.

His active involvement with the freedom struggle and his vision for national development, his mission of total transformation of the society, and his insistence on human values struck cord with persons from all strata and sections. He possessed a unique ability to communicate his unambiguous and often unorthodox ideas to the people in a lucid and effective way. He encouraged people to think independently and rationally. According to him *sarvodaya* believes in a process of thought that is conducive to the generation of harmony. It is based on the principle of togetherness, fundamental mutuality of human sorrow as well as happiness, and universal values. Love, not hatred, is the fundamental nature of man. One achieves fulfillment in life only when one is able to enrich and enhance somebody else's life.

He had realized the importance of strong citizenship, the unity of the nation and mutuality of healthy community; and believed that when civil life disappears, civil liberty has no meaning. He had also stated that the censorship of the mob is no less tyrannical than the censorship of the State. His nationalism and citizenship transcended narrow limits. He exhorted citizens to free their minds from the tangle of twisted ideas and strive to think in terms of the entire country. It pained him to see that the Indian society has been fragmented in innumerable castes and sects. His advice was not to follow the beaten tracks that will take us nowhere but to carve out new spaces.

It is remarkable that, undeterred by the conservative social ethos, Dada advocated that the woman has to be a

citizen truly equal to the man. He firmly believed that the woman must be free from fear of the man and the man free from greed for her. He wanted women to be at the same pedestal with men and exhorted them to rise against injustice and be independent. He wanted women and young men to participate in total revolution so as to bring about a revolution in all walks of life. He took keen and active interest in the activities of the youth and students and worked for social emancipation. He inspired people around him to think independently and rationally and wanted the youth and women to participate in the activities that can bring change.

True to his ideals and values, his noting on the last page of his diary stated that he should be cremated at the place of his death. If there is the facility of electric cremation, that should be availed of. There should not be any processions or speeches at the cremation. The body should not be taken to any special place. There should neither be any memorial nor any condolence meetings.

Dada propagated and lived by his principles of human relationship, love and development for all. The life-long passions of this world citizen remained enlightenment of youth, women and total transformation of society in a nonviolent manner. His razor-sharp intellect combined with unadulterated human goodness, his understanding of Gandhian ideology with an incisive insight in the contemporary situation and his life-long commitment and work to bring non-violent change in the society put him in a category by himself.

In conversation (10 february 1978)



FRED J. BLUM (FJB): Before I ask you any particular question I would be grateful if you would tell me what your contacts with Gandhiji were.

DADA DHARMADHIKARI (DD): Well, my contacts with Gandhiji were not very intimate. I didn't live with him. As a matter of fact, I never lived in his *ashram*, I have never spent 24 hours in any *ashram*, except recently in Vinoba's *ashram* at Pavnar.

FJB: Were you there for a longer time?

DD: Yes, for almost two weeks.

FJB: I spent a week there in 1965.

DD: In 1965? So you are not a stranger to this country.

FJB: Not thoroughly, this is my fourth visit. I know a little bit, but it is such a big country, you know.

DD: Yes, and you are being a bird of passage, now-a-days.

FJB: Can you tell me your feelings and ideas about Gandhiji and what he meant to you?

DD: Gandhiji was never a man of ideas and ideals; that has been my feeling. I felt attracted to him because he was the most uncommitted human being I have met.

FJB: What do you mean by uncommitted?

DD: Committed to no ideology, philosophy, or outlook. His only commitment was to truth. And one who is

committed to truth cannot be committed to anything else. So that is what particularly attracted me. Gandhiji was most human in the sense that he was unlabelled. And so I had the pleasure of hearing my own voice.

FJB: For me it is always strange to hear my own voice. Can you tell me where did you meet Gandhiji? You said you never stayed with him, but did you meet him?

DD: I met him for the first time in Nagpur during the session of the All India Congress Committee in December 1920. He appealed to me very much but I was against his boycott of educational institutions. And I think for about six months, I wrote articles against his insistence on the boycott of British education, and government schools and colleges. I never agreed that no education was better than the present education. As a matter of fact, I have always believed that this education has been a blessing in disguise.

FJB: In which way?

DD: In the first place, it has given us national unity; it has made Indian citizenship possible. There was no Indian citizen before the British came.

FJB: In which capacity did you meet him?

DD: I was a student in college and one of my friends declared in the meeting that I had also boycotted my college. I stood up and said 'I did not'. He took me to Gandhi who was staying in a house nearby and we had a long discussion. I said, 'Mahatmaji, I am unconvinced but I am prepared to follow you because you are about to launch on a great experiment, an unprecedented historical experiment.'

FJB: You were prepared to follow him in which way, not in terms of education?

DD: Yes, I did. I didn't actually boycott but I did not attend college after that.

FJB: You left college?

DD: Yes.

FJB: And what did you do then?

DD: For some time I went about propagating Gandhi's message of peaceful resistance and then I joined the local national school as a schoolmaster because it is the easiest job, the job that comes very handy.

FJB: Was it basic education?

DD: No, there was no talk of basic education then, all non-government education meant national education; without government aid or control.

FJB: And this is what you did. Was it in Nagpur?

DD: In Nagpur, yes.

FJB: For how long did you do that?

DD: For about 15 years.

FJB: 15 years, from 1920?

DD: 1921.

FJB: And you did this for 15 years and what happened then?

DD: You see, these national schools began to dwindle as the Movement began to peter out. No movement can be sustained at the same tempo.

FJB: But it was part of the struggle for independence?

DD: Yes.

FJB: But this struggle went on until the 1940s, but the schools you say petered out before?

DD: No, between every movement there was a lull and during that interval those who were interested in Gandhiji's constructive programme were engaged in it, and those who were interested only in agitation resumed their normal activity.

FJB: And the national schools were part of the constructive programme?

DD: Yes, they were, but they didn't thrive.

FJB: What do you think is the reason for their not thriving?

DD: I told you the enthusiasm of the people is always short-lived. This constructive programme was correlated to the agitation. So as soon as the agitation came to a standstill these constructive schools' activities also lost their zeal.

FJB: So in about 1936 you stopped being a schoolmaster. Were you actually teaching or organizing?

DD: Teaching.

FJB: And what did you do then?

DD: Then I went over to Wardha. Gandhi came to Wardha in 1935. Jamnalal Bajaj, who was not only a great devotee but also a devoted follower of Gandhiji, was a rich man, who wanted to use his money for furthering Gandhiji's activities. He wanted to make Wardha a sort of Gandhi

Centre, a centre of all sorts of activities connected with Gandhi. When we first met in 1923, he wanted me to go to Wardha, but since I was teaching in the national school I did not go. But in 1935 I found that I was not of much use to the national school; the boys were far below the standard.

FJB: The boys who went to the school?

DD: Yes, in the school. And I did not know how to teach these primary classes. I had my limitations as a schoolmaster. So then I shifted to Wardha, as Jamnalal wanted.

FJB: And what did you do then in Wardha?

DD: In Wardha I spent a year or so doing nothing. I had the gift of the gab, you know, and can talk a great deal without much sense, sort of stump orator. So I used to go about lecturing. Then after a year or two, we had an institution called the Gandhi Seva Sangh. They wanted to start a Hindi magazine, *Sarvodaya*. I was helping Kakasaheb Kalelkar to edit it.

FJB: And how long did you do that?

DD: Well, almost up to 1942 when the Quit India Movement came, and we had to stop it.

FJB: Why did you have to stop? Because of the government?

DD: Yes, because of the government.

FJB: What did you do from 1942 to 1948?

DD: I was in jail from 1942 to 1946.

FJB: The whole time?

DD: Yes.

FJB: That is a long time.

DD: Four years doesn't mean much.

FJB: And then during 1946 to 1948 did you go back to Wardha?

DD: I didn't go back to Wardha. Actually, I came to Nagpur and then I contested an election at Gandhi's insistence. I had no aptitude for this parliamentary work and didn't like it. As a matter of fact I shunned it. But then friends prevailed on Gandhiji and he insisted that I should contest the election.

FJB: And you did?

DD: I did. I was elected, but I had stipulated one thing, that I wouldn't hold any office, either of power or honour. I shall steer clear of all honour and all office. Both Gandhi and Sardar Patel agreed. I was there for five years.

FJB: In the Parliament?

DD: Not actually in the Parliament, but here in the Provincial Assembly and in the Constituent Assembly also.

FJB: In Delhi?

DD: Yes. You may regard it as the period of my real incarceration.

FJB: Why real incarceration?

DD: Because I felt more at ease in prison than in these parliamentary institutions.

FJB: Can you elaborate a little more?

DD: You feel rather cramped, you know. You have the political parties. Political parties are based on freedom of thought which they deny to their members. So I always regarded political parties as a conspiracy against the people.

FJB: Because they deny freedom?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Well, this gives me an idea. But you see all this time you have been associated with Gandhiji?

DD: Yes, closely associated with Gandhi but not personally associated.

FJB: But you met him?

DD: Several times, yes.

FJB: What was your impression when you met him?

DD: As I told you, he was extremely humane and open-minded, without inhibitions except for some of his old-fashioned ideas.

FJB: For example?

DD: Well, he called himself a Hindu. There were several other things.

FJB: What else?

DD: His weakness for the Muslims who are incorrigible bigots. He fought against Hindu bigotry. He couldn't do the same against Muslim bigotry.

FJB: You say he couldn't or he wouldn't?

DD: Well, that depends. I would simply say, he couldn't. Yes, the circumstances were not congenial.

FJB: What are the other aspects of Gandhiji you didn't feel in harmony with?

DD: His orthodoxy. He seemed to believe in organized religion which, I have always thought, is a monstrosity. It is irreligion.

FJB: Because it's organized?

DD: Yes, organized religion is divisive, all organized thought is divisive.

FJB: And Gandhiji was open to different religions?

DD: Yes, yes. He had charity of judgement in abundant measure.

FJB: But he still stuck to the religious institutions?

DD: Yes, for instance he talked about this *varnashram dharma*. *Varna* is the fourfold system as distinguished from caste, but this *varna* is a psychological and sociological myth, it can never become an actuality.

FJB: Can you say more? I don't know enough about that.

DD: Caste is determined by your birth, your parentage. *Varna*, they say, is determined by your qualities and the work that you do. But how do you determine these? If a child is born of *Brahmin* parents, how do you determine his *varna* and what education do you give him then? So this *varna* is an impossibility.

FJB: Do you feel everybody should get the same education?

DD: To an extent.

FJB: And then?

DD: Well, then you can branch out, you can choose your vocation afterwards. But every child must be given the same education up to a certain stage.

FJB: You have already mentioned some of them, but let me just ask. What do you feel were Gadhiji's outstanding qualities?

DD: As I told you, his devotion to truth, and his attempt to translate that truth as he knew it into actual life. And life means relationship. He wanted to live truth in his relations with men, other animals and nature.

FJB: What made him come to that insight, to that attitude? What you just said, what brought him to that?

DD: I think he was born with an instinct for all this. It didn't come from outside, it was not a thing that he borrowed.

FJB: It was part of him?

DD: Yes, it wasn't acquired. It was so spontaneous.

FJB: But doesn't every human being have that?

DD: Yes, every human being has. But every human being is distorted by the education that his parents give him. This religious education, this cultural education, these are all misnomers.

FJB: But you feel Gandhiji was able to free himself?

DD: Yes, he was. He did.

FJB: And therefore, he could realize what is part of all of us. Now Gandhi's mother, am I right, was a Jain?¹ How did that affect him?

DD: It did affect him to a certain extent such as his insistence on fasts, his faith in fasts, which I never shared. You asked me all things I didn't share with him, these fasts I never shared with him.

FJB: How did you feel about them?

DD: I always thought that they are a sort of coercion and they don't change your heart at all, these fasts don't help to purify you. It's the reason that purifies, it's understanding that purifies.

FJB: And what do you mean by reason?

DD: Just understand the other man's point of view, and by introspection you see your own foibles, your own faults, you own shortcomings. So as soon as you understand them, you begin to get over them. Understanding is the best corrective.

FJB: Now Gandhi's father was a *baniya*, how did that affect him?

DD: Gandhiji was an astute man of affairs.

FJB: Can you say more?

DD: He applied truth to most of his dealings, even with diplomats, that was perhaps the most tactful thing that he

¹ Gandhi's mother Putlibai belonged to the *Pranami* Sect. This is a religious tradition seeking to combine the notable features of both Hinduism and Islam.

could do. He said once, 'I tell the truth and the diplomats don't believe me, that is how I succeed.'

FJB: But you say he was an astute man of affairs?

DD: Yes.

FJB: You mean it in that sense?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Not in a business way?

DD: No, he had no business, no other business than life; life was his only business, integrated life.

FJB: What do you feel were the most formative influences on Gandhi's life?

DD: Well, I wonder whether I could tell you, but so far as I have been able to observe, Jainism was one because he was a Jain in his childhood, but then the other most formative influence was Christianity.

FJB: In which way?

DD: His faith in non-resistance, in non-violence. I think that came from Jesus. And then he reread it in Hindu scriptures.

FJB: Isn't it also very much part of the Hindu, the Indian tradition?

DD: Well, the Indian tradition is rather complex. So far as the Hindu tradition is concerned, absolute non-violence was never their faith, their article of faith. It was with the Jains. But the Jains always believed in non-killing so far as non-human beings were concerned, but you could kill human beings in war. So also were the Buddhists. And to the Hindus, war was sacred, a part of their religion.

FJB: But you feel that Gandhiji found different kinds of non-violence in Christianity?

DD: Yes.

FJB: But Christians also...

DD: Christians have had their crusades.

FJB: Yes.

DD: You have denied your master thrice before the cock crows.

FJB: But this is very interesting to me that you feel that this was really one of the most important influences?

DD: Yes, that's my reading of Gandhi.

FJB: Did he ever talk to you about it?

DD: I did not talk to him very much, sometimes I did.

FJB: What kind of things would you talk to him about?

DD: Several kinds of things. I was always regarded as one who talked rather banteringly.

FJB: Well, that's not what I feel about you.

DD: But I had some discussions with him always.

FJB: About these questions or more about your own work?

DD: Not these questions because I am not even interested in these questions now. There may have been several influences in his life and he may have also not have known all the influences that worked. I don't know.

FJB: Did you talk to him about your work?

DD: Yes, mostly about my work. I never went to him with questions of principles.

FJB: You worked these out yourself?

DD: Yes, and then sometimes I compared notes. I had more discussions and more heart-to-heart talks with Vinoba.

FJB: I see. Did Gandhiji have a sense of humour?

DD: Oh yes, otherwise he couldn't have lived.

FJB: What do you mean?

DD: Sense of humour was the one thing that sustained him in all these various activities and helped him to pull through thick and thin.

FJB: Do you feel that during the time which you have known him, which was almost the whole time he spent in India, did he change during that time?

DD: He did.

FJB: In which way?

DD: The first change came in his attitude towards the British. He was a loyalist during the war, then he became a non-cooperator. Then there was also a distinct change in his attitude towards caste. He said the caste system must go.

FJB: When did that come, in the 1920s?

DD: After the 1920s, almost after the 1930s. After his campaign for the removal of untouchability.

FJB: In what other ways did he change?

DD: In his attitude towards economic questions. In his last days he had come to believe that the landless farmers and small peasants will have to offer some sort of fight, non-violent fight.

FJB: In order to free themselves?

DD: Yes. In order to eliminate ownership of land.

FJB: What about him as a person, his character, his personality, did that change?

DD: He was very transparent and always willing to reform himself, to change. He never believed he was perfect. He was in every sense of the term very normal, and normal human beings are not easily found.

FJB: What do you mean by normal?

DD: I relate that incident of George Bernard Shaw. When he was 60 years old, he found that most people of his age had spectacles on their noses but he had none so he thought there was something wrong with his eyes. So he went to an ophthalmologist and asked him to examine his sight, and the ophthalmologist after examining him wrote 'normal'. He said, '98 per cent of my friends wear glasses and I don't, so are their eyes not normal?' Then the ophthalmologist answered, 'Only 2 per cent people have normal sight.' That was the case with Gandhi.

FJB: Do you know Erikson's book, *Gandhi's Truth*? He says that there was violence in Gandhiji. Could you comment on that?

DD: I think these are all specialists and specialists don't have normal vision. Have you read Shaw's *Androphiles and the Lion*?

FJB: Yes.

DD: He has tried to psychoanalyze Christ. So, so many people have attempted a psychoanalysis of Gandhi which is all awry.

FJB: All awry means?

DD: Off the mark.

FJB: Gandhiji attached a great deal of importance to his diet. Did he ever talk to you about this?

DD: I never believed in these dietetics.

FJB: You didn't?

DD: No. I am a strict vegetarian though. I believe a vegetarian diet is the only human diet which is both scientific and human.

FJB: I agree with you, but you didn't agree with Gandhiji's particular diet?

DD: Oh, no. I never believed in Gandhiji's or Vinoba's dietetics. Even great men should be allowed to have some eccentricities that add a little spice to life, flavour.

FJB: And this is one of the eccentricities?

DD: Yes.

FJB: This is a statement that a westerner made, should I read it to you?

DD: Yes, I can't read it.

FJB: He says, 'Gandhi's dietary fads and obsession with hygiene are versions of archaic Indian ideas on the body's metabolism, and projection of the body's wholeness on the holistic social order.' Does that make sense?

DD: All that I would like to comment is that even Gandhiji's eccentricities lean towards magnanimity.

FJB: In which way?

DD: He tried everything. Every experiment was directed towards cosmic harmony, as he understood it.

FJB: And how did he understand it?

DD: His attitude towards vegetables, trees, animals, and cow. In our ancient Indian tradition, milk is regarded as something left over. When the calf has left over, you take the milk, not otherwise. Honey is the vomit of the bee. That is how the ancients defined all these. So Gandhi wouldn't exploit the cow. Therefore, he abjured cow's milk. That is how all his experiments were directed towards cosmic harmony, his relationship with other beings.

FJB: Is this how you felt it or how he expressed it?

DD: He didn't express it.

FJB: I never heard this.

DD: Yes, all this is my interpretation.

FJB: Well, that's what I want.

DD: I am telling you how I looked at Gandhi, how I understand him. I don't know whether he himself understood in the way in which I understand him. So this is my

image of Gandhi, it may be real, it may not be real, I don't know.

FJB: I am glad you gave me that because that's what I wanted, it helps us to understand it. What experience do you have with Gandhiji's non-violence campaign? You spoke about being imprisoned. So can you say a little more about any of the campaigns you participated in?

DD: I had participated in all his campaigns.

FJB: In all of them?

DD: Yes, in 1921, then in 1930, 1932 and 1942.

FJB: Also in the Salt March?

DD: I wasn't there in the Salt March. He had hand-picked companions.

FJB: But in the whole campaign?

DD: I was here in Nagpur, I was working in my own field.

FJB: And how did the campaign affect your own work?

DD: Well, it didn't leave any time for any other work. I plunged into it with all my strength and all my life.

FJB: Into the campaign?

DD: Yes, into the campaign. I was head and shoulders in.

FJB: In this area, is that right?

DD: Yes, and this area was quite wide even then. This was the old central province.

FJB: I see, so in the early 1930s you were still here?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Then in 1935, you were editing the journals?

DD: Up to 1935 I was here. And from 1935 to 1946 I was in Wardha. In 1946, I returned to Nagpur and have been here ever since.

FJB: What do you feel is the essential meaning of *satyagraha*?

DD: *Satyagraha* rules out any kind of ill-feeling towards the opponent. Even your opponent is your playmate as you have your opponent in games. He is your partner, as a matter of fact, though he is on the opposite side. So *satyagraha* is sportsmanship applied to social and political life. It eschews all feelings of enmity towards your adversary, your willingness to be converted to his point of view, to understand his point of view.

FJB: And, you felt that in yourself. But do you feel that generally this was?

DD: I can't also vouch that I felt it myself. This is how I intellectually interpret it. Whether I felt it or not is another question.

FJB: Did you feel it?

DD: I can't say that, as I just told you.

FJB: Sometimes you did and sometimes you didn't?

DD: Yes. But I can tell you I don't feel any enmity towards anyone. But sometimes I do feel a sort of alienation, a

feeling of separatedness, an estrangement, not amounting to enmity. Sometimes it does border upon a sort of aversion also.

FJB: And can you say from the people you knew and the Movement, did many people really achieve what you achieved?

DD: I think about five per cent. But that five per cent is considerable.

FJB: Who really didn't feel any enmity towards the opponent?

DD: Yes, they were much superior to me in this respect. This is what I am saying about myself.

FJB: But you say five per cent were basically able to follow this?

DD: Yes. To an appreciable extent.

FJB: And for the others?

DD: Well, I think it was, sort of, make-believe.

FJB: Make-believe that they didn't?

DD: They didn't. It was sort of make-believe that they followed, they didn't actually follow the thing.

FJB: I see. And why did they follow it? Because of Gandhiji, or because of the movement?

DD: Yes, yes. Because of the movement. Because there was no other method available.

FJB: Did Gandiji's ideas on non-violence change during his life-time?

DD: No. They became, if anything, more intense.

FJB: Many people say that this approach could work in India under the British but could not work in other circumstances.

DD: This is hypothetical. It has never been tried anywhere else.

FJB: You just said that it was the only approach available, what did you mean?

DD: Because we couldn't offer armed resistance; it was out of question. Terrorism is different. Terrorism, rioting and insurrection wouldn't have brought about any change. So, a method in which the common citizen could participate actively; this was first enunciated by Tilak and Sri Aurobindo also in those days. Then Gandhi made it more effective.

FJB: I would like to read you again something. Again, these are westerners, and I would like your opinion of this Western interpretation.

DD: Yes.

FJB: He said that 'Dialectic of *satyagraha* ultimately rests on the mystical premise that realization of truth mutually liberates both parties and establishes them in love for all.'

DD: It does not, it does not. It rests on the fact that you do not want to eliminate human beings, you want to correct human beings in order to bring them nearer. This has nothing to do with mysticism. I want to eliminate poverty

and I want to do it because poverty creates a division between man and man. So I want to eliminate it in order that men may come nearer. This has nothing to do with any mysticism.

FJB: But do you feel truth does mutually liberate?

DD: I don't know, I have never found truth, so it would be hypocrisy.

FJB: Well, you are a modest person.

DD: No, no, I don't know what modesty is.

FJB: Well, you say you have never found truth.

DD: Modesty is an attitude, and I haven't got that attitude. I have not found truth. The only truth I know is life and life consists in mutuality. You may call this unity of life the ultimate truth. So that which is conducive to the unity of life is truth, that is non-violence.

FJB: What is conducive is the unity of life. So mutuality would really also be related to unity of life?

DD: Yes, mutuality is the way in which unity of life is expressed.

FJB: I have to read you something Kripalani said. He says:

The Indian effort has always been to resolve apparent contradictions through a dialectical process of its own. This does not require destructive revolutions to eliminate the thesis and the antithesis and establish on their destruction a temporary and unstable synthesis. Coordination is achieved through the force of thought and by virtue of certain basic ideas. The genius of

the Indian people is constructive, catholic and assimilative, it is neither negative nor destructive.

DD: Well, I can accept it, but I wouldn't express it in the same language.

FJB: Well express it in your own language. What would you say?

DD: We are seeking a harmonious way of life and not a dialectical way. Our outlook has been harmonious. This is not the Indian outlook, this is Gandhi's outlook. I wouldn't say that it is Indian outlook because ours is a land of miracles, contradictions and contrasts. You have the great philosophy of *advait* and you have untouchability in this country.

FJB: Yes, both.

DD: So man has never been the main concern in India. So I have never regarded this country as spiritual. This is a country of religious people and the reason is concerned with the other world. And all incentive is, therefore, materialistic because in heaven you will have happiness, nothing more.

FJB: I have not still quite followed when you said 'all incentive is, therefore, material'.

DD: Material because it is only material happiness which you will find in the other world, in heaven, in your Eldorado.

FJB: But you wouldn't say that the Indian people are spiritual?

DD: No, if they were spiritual they would never have been slaves for several years. Spirituality is inconsistent with slavery of any kind.

FJB: Does *satyagraha* assume that there is an absolute truth?

DD: Well, as I told you, *satyagraha* must assume that there is unity of life. This is the ultimate truth that I understand. I have never understood any other truth. Your life and my life is the same; so killing you diminishes my life. As a philosopher once said, 'Every man's death diminishes me.'

FJB: But let me take a specific example. Jinnah would not agree with Gandhiji.

DD: No.

FJB: Now what does that mean for truth?

DD: The difference was never about truth, it was a conflict between Jinnah's self-interest and Gandhi's catholicity. It was a sectarian interest, the interest of the Moslem nation which is the fiction.

FJB: But doesn't that mean that Jinnah denied the truth?

DD: Yes, it does. He denied this harmony of life.

FJB: And the unity of life?

DD: Integrity, yes. I would prefer the word integrity here because there were two interests. The integration of the interests of Jinnah and of the Hindu, he never thought, could be integrated.

FJB: You spoke about fasting. What do you feel the role that fasting played in Gandhiji's non-violent campaign?

DD: It succeeded in bringing about immediate results, but ultimately there was a feeling of bitterness. It left a

bitter taste in the mouth with some, in the mouth of those against whom these fasts were directed.

FJB: It didn't bring about an inner change?

DD: No.

FJB: That was the idea, wasn't it?

DD: Yes.

FJB: The hope?

DD: Yes. Conversion was the idea.

FJB: But that didn't happen?

DD: That didn't happen.

FJB: Now, here again, Gandhi conceived the method of *satyagraha* precisely because he was involved, above all, in a quest for harmony.

DD: Yes.

FJB: Not a harmony which produced, in Aurobindo's words, 'A single white monotone', but rather in the words echoed as well by many of Aurobindo's contemporaries, 'a great diversity in the fundamental unity.'

DD: Yes, I would call it harmonious diversity.

FJB: You would agree with that?

DD: Yes.

FJB: And what does harmonious diversity really mean?

DD: The diversity that is conducive to bringing people together, nearer.

FJB: By recognizing that each person is different?

DD: Yes. Yet the same.

FJB: Both?

DD: Different but not contradictory, difference is not always contradiction.

FJB: It has also been said that Gandhiji's non-violence made too great demands on people. What do you feel about that?

DD: I don't feel that. It was the people's conditioning that came in the way.

FJB: Conditioning in which way?

DD: We have been conditioned to a feeling of belligerence.

FJB: In India?

DD: Everywhere in the world. War is associated with heroism which it never was in reality. Violence has simply nothing to do with heroism. The soldier risks his life. Risking your life is heroism, and not killing. But we were conditioned to think that killing is the expression of heroism.

FJB: You spoke before about the culture and the parent that they are interfering with the spontaneous expression. Do you feel that? In which way does that apply here?

DD: Culture always imposes on you control and sense of duty. Duty is not spontaneous, control is not spontaneous. You have to remove the impediments, the obstructions, to spontaneity. That is what education should consist of. But instead you instill certain ideas and certain notions. This sort of indoctrination is doing violence to the soul of the people.

FJB: Well I agree very much with you. I express in different terms but it comes to the same.

DD: Yes.

FJB: You spoke about duty. But did Gandhiji truly think that discipline...?

DD: Yes. He did. There was discipline, but he also wanted that that discipline should be voluntary. You know that the word discipline comes from a root which means to learn.

FJB: Disciple.

DD: Yes, the disciple is one who learns, and this discipline is discipline of the rod.

FJB: So Gandhiji expected that everybody has his own discipline?

DD: Yes, self-discipline, self-control.

FJB: What about self-purification? What was the source of his power in self-purification? Gandhiji felt that self-purification gave him energy.

DD: He had an irresistible urge for self-purification, I should call it passion in the best sense of that word.

FJB: And what did it really mean to him?

DD: Spontaneity. The urge to do that thing. He couldn't rest content without doing it. It didn't come as something from outside, it was not imposed.

FJB: It came from within?

DD: From within.

FJB: Now, would you say that this was true also of his followers?

DD: No.

FJB: No? Did they impose a discipline on themselves, copying him?

DD: Yes, they did certain things to please him. And certain things, because they believed that obeying him would perhaps help them to mend their ways, to live a better life. So he was a sort of guru to his followers.

FJB: So, in that sense they were not spontaneous.

DD: No. Kaka Saheb once read to us a passage from the life of Jesus. Not knowing how to punish great men for their greatness, faith punishes them with disciples.

FJB: What about *brahmacharya*?

DD: I have always stood for *brahmacharya* as a social value, the inviolability of the human body.

FJB: Can you say more? I am not quite with you.

DD: No woman shall be used against her will; that is exploitation. And no man's body shall be used against his will in any kind of activity. To me, that is *brahmacharya*.

FJB: But isn't that very different from Gandhiji's idea?

DD: Yes, very different. It's different but not against, not contrary to what Gandhi said. One step this side.

FJB: It may not be contrary in itself but it leads to different conclusions.

DD: It doesn't, not necessarily.

FJB: But it would not exclude marriage?

DD: It does not. Because that union will be mutual, you won't regard your wife's body as an object and she wouldn't regard you as an object of her desire.

FJB: Yes. This I know. But this is different from saying that by not marrying you would be better people.

DD: That is abstinence. That is not *brahmacharya*. You are afraid of the woman's body. There can be no love where there is fear. That was the Christian concept. Marriage is a fall. Gandhi was proper in that concept first, in the Tolstoyan concept.

FJB: You mean, brought up at his home?

DD: No, afterwards.

FJB: Afterwards?

DD: He imbibed it.

FJB: So you feel that Gandhi really followed this kind of ascetic Christian tradition?

DD: In the beginning.

FJB: Yes.

DD: But when he came in contact with Vinoba, Vinoba gave him the other perspective. He came to our meetings and said, 'you know, Vinoba told me something which is magnanimous, which is magnificent'.

FJB: And what was that?

DD: Vinoba said that even sex could be divine.

FJB: But didn't Gandhiji advocate abstinence?

DD: Yes he did, Vinoba also. But their proposition is, where there is love, there can be no lust. But there can be sex without lust.

FJB: But did they accept that?

DD: They didn't.

FJB: They didn't? That's the difference between you and Gandhiji?

DD: But Gandhiji, in a sense, accepted it in his last experiments with sex, the experiments that he carried on in his last place.

FJB: In Noakhali?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Can you say more about these?

DD: No. Because I never knew about it when he was living.

FJB: Just say more about what you just said that he acknowledged in these experiments.

DD: In the sense that he had shed all fear of the woman's body.

FJB: I see, you feel that Gandhiji had a fear of a woman's body?

DD: Yes. That is what abstinence means, otherwise why do you abstain?

FJB: Yes, I can see what you mean. But what did Gandhiji see as the main purpose of his own ascetic attitude?

DD: This is what he has said not in so many words. But in some way, in an indirect way, he has said all this.

FJB: In my feeling I would almost say that Gandhiji's reaction against marriage was due to the fact that he really experienced the sexuality without feeling in his own life.

DD: That might have been. I can't express any opinion about that because I have never tried to study that aspect of his life.

FJB: But it would be in harmony with what you said.

DD: Yes.

FJB: Because once you do that, I think in terms of one's integrity, he simply had to.

DD: If there is love and your wife is ill you can't have sex. Still you love her. As love grows, sex decreases, so you don't have to exercise self-control. But *brahmacharya* is a social value, no woman's body will be violated.

FJB: I mean this is the first time that I hear it in these terms.

DD: I told you I understand Gandhi in my own way and with my limitations.

FJB: Gandhi often pointed out that fear is one of the major impediments. What did Gandhiji do to overcome fear in himself?

DD: Every situation in which he thought he was afraid of, he always buckled himself to face that situation. He never ran away from a situation, from any situation whatsoever. That is how he learned to conquer fear. Someone

has said 'fear is the dark room in which all negatives are developed'.

FJB: And how did his followers struggle with fears?

DD: In the same way.

FJB: By facing the situation?

DD: Yes.

FJB: I would like to ask you some questions about the whole Eastern and Western understanding of life, because it seems to me it is so much reflected in Gandhi.

DD: I am not interested in that question at all. As a matter of fact, I have never believed in the East and the West. I mean we are living on a globe and there is neither East nor West. You have come and met me man to man; we have so many things in common.

FJB: I know. But I still feel, for example, that the Indian way of life is quite different, let's say, from the American way of life.

DD: Yes, it is very different. But there is not much contradiction, there are several similarities.

FJB: What do you feel?

DD: In this, Martin Luther King could use Gandhi's methods. So every man is universal originally. He has been leveled and that is how he has been dwarfed.

FJB: You will be interested that my own ideas are that the new consciousness, which must come now, is the universal one.

DD: Yes, but there are several types of awareness. Emergent identities in America—in India also—which are seriously circumscribing this universal consciousness, awareness of which you are talking.

FJB: Yes, now what do you mean by ‘seriously circumscribing’? You mean limiting?

DD: Yes.

FJB: In different countries?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Let me just read this and see what you say. This is about India. ‘This melody is built up on the one great theme which tirelessly and everlastingly rejuvenates itself in the Indian spirit. It is the drama of *ahamkara*, the “I-maker” or ego-consciousness in opposition and indissoluble bondage to the *atman*, the self or non-ego.’

DD: This has been put in a language which I don’t understand.

FJB: What interests me is what was Gandhi’s experience, let’s say, of the *atman*?

DD: I don’t know. I myself don’t know much about the *atman*.

FJB: I am not sure about that.

DD: Krishnamurthy once said that the only soul he knew was the sole of his shoe.

FJB: But one thing that impressed me is that when I come to India there is a different sense of time.

DD: Have we any sense of time in India?

FJB: Well, that's what I want to ask you about. You know, if time could be like a river, like a sea, like an ocean.

DD: An agrarian country has no use for time, measured time. The peasant never works by the clock, his hours are never fixed. It is the factory which has the sense of time and not the farmer. And India is an agricultural country, we have seasons.

FJB: You don't feel it is part of the spirituality?

DD: Oh no, spirituality has simply nothing to do with this, and as I told you Indians are the least spiritual people in the world.

FJB: That comes as a shock to me.

DD: Yes and I want to administer...

FJB: I understand what you mean. Seen from the West, to me, India always felt like a very spiritual country but I use the term differently, do you understand?

DD: Yes.

FJB: What about the law of *karma*, did Gandhiji believe in it?

DD: Yes, he believed in it.

FJB: That was a life for him?

DD: Yes. Vinoba also believed in it.

FJB: Wouldn't you?

DD: I don't know. I don't know where *karma* came from and why has God visited me with this punishment. If God has made this world he must be the creator of the Satan

also. No one else could have created Satan, so he's father of Beelzebub also.

FJB: What does it mean to your life?

DD: It doesn't mean anything to my life. I am living here and I want to live at peace with you. Neighbourliness is all that I understand and care for.

FJB: How do you feel that Gandhi's belief in *karma* affected him and his life and his work?

DD: Just as it has been affecting other people in India.

FJB: In which way?

DD: Do the right in this life so that your next life may be more useful, better than the present life.

FJB: In that way?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Gandhiji translated the *Gita* into Gujarati, what did this mean to him?

DD: Vinoba, Gandhi, and several of our leaders have regarded *Gita* as the mother, the fountain of all their inspiration. But if you regard a book as a source of all inspiration, you cease to be a devotee of the truth. Commitment to truth precludes commitment to anything else.

FJB: But do you feel that this means a flaw, so to speak, in Gandhiji's commitment to truth?

DD: Well, he tried to reconcile it, but he was hard put to it.

FJB: It was difficult, you mean?

DD: Yes.

FJB: So he felt a tension, is that right?

DD: He wanted to reconcile these things which Vinoba has been doing.

FJB: But you don't think he succeeded really in the reconciliation?

DD: How can I judge, he may have succeeded. It's for him to say, not for me. I have not succeeded in reconciling these two things.

FJB: Well that's why you feel you should not follow any book.

DD: I don't want to judge them.

FJB: I understand that. I don't want you judging in that sense. I want to hear your impressions and experience. But Gandhiji's interpretation of the *Gita* was quite different from those of others.

DD: Yes, that is why I say there is no *Gita*, it is Gandhiji who is there. If you interpret the Bible in your own way it is you who are speaking and not Christ.

FJB: Did Gandhiji ever talk to you about it?

DD: No, I didn't talk to him about so many things. He was a very busy man and I didn't want to bother.

FJB: What about his prayer meetings, did you ever attend?

DD: Yes, I attended.

FJB: Can you tell me a little bit about them, what they were, what feelings?

DD: Well, there was an atmosphere of mutuality. Praying together means praying with one another, and not against one another. That was his greatest contribution.

FJB: And he used different religions, is that right, in his prayer meetings? It wasn't a Hindu prayer meeting.

DD: No. It was an all religions' prayer.

FJB: I want to ask you one other thing that you may disagree with, but I still want to ask you. One way of distinguishing between East and West is saying that in the West there is a strong sense of opposites, dark and light, good and evil, and so on, whereas in the East it is not the same sense of opposites. It is more like the lotus flower where it comes out of the mud, out of the dirt, and it's a beautiful flower. Can you say anything about that?

DD: I would just point out to you one peculiarity. You may call it the Indian way of looking at things. We have no word for Satan in our language, in no Indian language.

FJB: And what does that mean? That's very important.

DD: Even the devil is our kinsman because he is God's son. So our gods have their relations among demons.

FJB: And what does it mean in terms of your own attitude?

DD: We don't have these – good and evil. These are not two different identities. We don't believe in the existence, in the separate existence of evil as such.

FJB: So what is evil?

DD: Evil is sort of deformity, a departure from man's original nature. So there are no incorrigible vicious people in the world.

FJB: All right, but what brings about these deformities?

DD: No one can answer that question. That's an impossible question.

FJB: What about *dharma*, what did *dharma* really mean for Gandhiji?

DD: As I told you, *dharma* meant the truth for him. Originally he said 'God is Truth' and then he changed the maxim into 'Truth is God'.

FJB: That was my next question. I want to ask you what brought about this change?

DD: Because there are several Gods. There is God in the Mosque, there is God in the Temple, there is God in the Church. If there is more than one God, they are all devils. Because devil is the only claimant of God's throne. One who claims God's throne is the devil.

FJB: Did Gandhiji ever talk to you about what Hinduism meant to him?

DD: No. Because I have read sufficient of his views on Hinduism.

FJB: What do you think was the essence of Hinduism for Gandhiji?

DD: Truth and non-violence, of every religion, and also Hinduism.

FJB: And what were the aspects that he rejected or repudiated?

DD: Untouchability, caste, all that divides, violence, war.

FJB: You know, it interests me. When I was in Sevagram last time, in Gandhiji's *ashram*, the only picture I saw is a picture of Jesus.

DD: Yes.

FJB: Why did he put that in, I could never find out. Why did he have it there?

DD: Well, I don't know whether he himself put it. Someone else may have put it, I don't know. He would have had no objection.

FJB: But he wouldn't have left it unless it meant something for him?

DD: Jesus meant a great deal for him just as I told you. The Ten Commandments meant so much to him.

FJB: Gandhi came close to Christianity, but never became a Christian.

DD: No.

FJB: Could you comment on that?

DD: He never believed in conversion, formal conversion.

FJB: He thought a man should stay what he is?

DD: Where's the necessity of changing? You love Christ, that is all. And you can love Christ and Krishna at the same time. Is there any contradiction between the two? Love of

Christ is not exclusive, if it is exclusive it is not religion.
Religion is inclusive.

FJB: Some time when he was asked why he did not become a Christian, he said that he didn't want to be forgiven for his sins but he wanted to be free from sin.

DD: That is one of the ways, these are Gandhi's *obiter dicta*.

FJB: What do you mean by that?

DD: Side remarks, casual remarks.

FJB: I see.

DD: Yes, in formal Christianity you are forgiven for your sins.

FJB: And when you say it was a side remark, didn't he mean it?

DD: Yes, he meant it. He said, 'I want punishment for myself and forgiveness for others.' Generally, a man wants forgiveness for himself and punishment for others, and he put this upside down.

FJB: Did he say that to you?

DD: He said this in his interpretation of the *Gita*.

FJB: What does really sin mean in that context?

DD: I don't know what sin means, but to me sin is all that divides men, everything that separates me from you.

FJB: Gandhiji liked much of the New Testament, do you know what he liked most?

DD: No, I can't tell you. Perhaps it is the Ten Commandments that he liked most.

FJB: But what were for him the main differences between Christianity and Hinduism?

DD: I can't tell you that. I never talked to him about this.

FJB: One question always interests me: What was the meaning of suffering for Gandhiji?

DD: Doing or bearing something which is unpleasant for the sake of general good, this is suffering.

FJB: Because you feel it is the truth?

DD: Yes, and also because I feel it is for the general good.

FJB: How do you feel the things we talked about so far are related to Gandhiji's ideas on society and the social order?

DD: Well, they are all integrated. These are several threads. If you gather them together they will give you some idea, an integrated idea of Gandhi's outlook.

FJB: And how would you describe that outlook as far as the social order is concerned?

DD: As I told you, relationship without any extraneous basis, spontaneous relationship.

FJB: You spoke in the beginning about *varnas* and *varnadharma*. It has been said that Gandhiji extolled *varnadharma* as an ideal of social harmony?

DD: I don't agree.

FJB: No? Can you say why not?

DD: I told you it is impossible to have *varnas*.

FJB: Yes, but did he extol it?

DD: Yes, he did. Even Vinoba does.

FJB: And you? Because it isn't realizable?

DD: No, it is not realizable at all.

FJB: What kind of society did Gandhiji visualize and work for?

DD: A face-to-face society where the humblest man was not anonymous. Where the producer knew the consumer, the consumer knew the producer, the producer produced for the consumer and the consumer consumed because he knew the producer. There was actual relationship.

FJB: Would that mean not only a decentralized, but also...

DD: These are shibboleths—centralization and decentralization. I don't believe in these shibboleths, a society which is intimate, conducive to personal relationships.

FJB: So he would reject competition?

DD: There could be no competition, there could be emulation.

FJB: There would be cooperation?

DD: Cooperation and emulation.

FJB: Would there be a market?

DD: No, but purchasing power will never be the basis of distribution. Sharing. It was a familial order of society which he visualized.

FJB: But do you feel that this is possible now?

DD: Yes, it is possible if we want to bring it about. It is impossible if there is no will to do it.

FJB: But would it exclude all large industry?

DD: No, it would exclude nothing, except such industry as suppresses humanity.

FJB: So it's more a question of an attitude, is that right?

DD: Yes, right.

FJB: And what about the idea of trusteeship? Gandhiji, I think, attached a great deal of importance to it.

DD: Have you met our people in Bombay?

FJB: Ramachandran, I met Ramachandran.

DD: Not Ramachandran. There is the Trusteeship Foundation in Bombay.

FJB: No, I don't know.

DD: When you sent your letter to me, to their care. They are in Bombay, please meet them.

FJB: I would be glad to.

DD: And if you leave your address with me I shall request them to send you my speech on trusteeship.

FJB: And you interpreted in that speech, Gandhiji's ideas?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Gandhiji spoke about society in terms of health and illness. What did that mean to him?

DD: I never subscribed to those views. As a matter of fact, I am not competent to pronounce any opinion about these things.

FJB: About the question of society. What about the constructive programme? You were at the midst of it.

DD: Yes, it was correlated. His constructive programme was an aspect of his revolution. He wanted to change values.

FJB: That also means change people?

DD: Yes.

FJB: You say he wanted to change values. In which way did he want to change values?

DD: Well, now our economy is based on exchange value, on price, he wanted to substitute value for price. For example, air. Air has no price but it has the greatest value for my life, it is the breath of my nostrils. So value and price are two things. The sense of value, that is what he wanted to base his economy on.

FJB: That's a very different economy from what we have now?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Did he ever talk about a good or ideal society?

DD: No.

FJB: What about *khadi*? What did *khadi* mean to Gandhiji?

DD: Well, it was a symbol of his attitude towards life, non-exploitative.

FJB: Is that why he started it?

DD: Yes. In the beginning he started it as an item in the programme of *swadeshi*. But subsequently, he evolved his theory, his *swadeshi* meant neighbourliness, nothing more and nothing less.

FJB: What about his work with the *charkha*?

DD: That is really a symbol, a symbol of his economy.

FJB: What about his ideas on technology?

DD: He never abjured technology. Technology should be subservient to men. Man is a tool-making animal and every tool is an extension of your limb, but it shouldn't substitute. It can modify man, but not substitute him.

FJB: And that was really his basic attitude?

DD: Yes.

FJB: If Gandhi had lived enough to develop a social order for India, what would he have done?

DD: Well, this question is like solving a crossword puzzle.

FJB: You mean you can't solve it?

DD: I can't, because I have not got Gandhi's mind. Gandhi alone could answer it.

FJB: I want to ask you some questions about Gandhi's attitude towards women. It has been said that Gandhiji took an attitude towards women very different from the traditional one?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Can you comment on that?

DD: It was very patent. For the first time women were participating in this national struggle in such large numbers. Then he said *brahmacharya* was for women also, which our tradition never accepted.

FJB: I see.

DD: There were fundamental ways in which Gandhi differed from tradition. He was a whole hogger so far as social reform was concerned. This meant reform of relation of the sexes.

FJB: For some time he felt that celibacy was superior to marriage. Would you say that remained his idea?

DD: Yes that was his idea. That is Vinoba's idea even today.

FJB: And why was this Gandhiji's idea?

DD: As I told you if you regard all bodies as sacred, you cannot look upon them as an object of your enjoyment.

FJB: That is really your interpretation of it?

DD: Everything that I have said is my interpretation.

FJB: Gandhiji said that women can be more non-violent than men.

DD: Yes, and they are more violent actually, because they are cowards.

FJB: Say more.

DD: Cowardice is the most violent thing in the world, and violence is the most cowardly thing in the world.

FJB: But why are women cowards?

DD: Because they have been labouring under the wrong impression, that bodily strength counts, that manual strength is superior.

FJB: But would you agree with Gandhiji that women are more non-violent?

DD: No.

FJB: But he did say that.

DD: Yes, just as he said that the villager in India was a man of character, which is not true.

FJB: I did not get that.

DD: The country dweller, he said, is more moral than the city dweller. This is not the truth, this is not the fact. He appears so because he has less opportunities of becoming immoral.

FJB: But basically?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Some people say that Gandhiji combined in himself the masculine and feminine in a new way.

DD: Every man does.

FJB: Yes, but did Gandhiji do it in a particular way, different from others?

DD: Because he had motherly affection, so he was father and mother both.

FJB: He had a strong motherly affection?

DD: Yes, yes.

FJB: Was that part of his nature or did he develop it?

DD: No, it was part of his nature. It was there already, he developed it.

FJB: What was the relationship between the liberation movement and the traditional family? Were women encouraged to maintain their traditional family obligations?

DD: No. He wanted women to lead a pure and devoted life. Devotion to the members of the family is different from devotion to a single person.

FJB: Can you say more about that?

DD: Our present society is based on the slavery of women.

FJB: Because they have a subordinate position?

DD: Yes. Second, they are secondary human beings.

FJB: But Gandhi wanted to change this?

DD: Yes, he wanted to change this.

FJB: And in that sense he wanted to change the traditional family?

DD: Yes.

FJB: But he did not want everyone to live a life of celibacy?

DD: No.

FJB: Only those who were dedicated and moved?

DD: He said even after marriage if you lead a life of celibacy it would be ideal.

FJB: What about his attitude to caste? You have already spoken about it. He once said that if he had to be reborn he would choose to be a Harijan.

DD: Because he was the lowest and the last in this country, not otherwise.

FJB: So this relates to say that others should be forgiven.

DD: Yes.

FJB: But would you say that Gandhiji, in a way, took the faults of other people on himself?

DD: I would rather say he wanted to identify. When you identify yourself with the sufferings of other people, you are more intimate with them, your relationship is closer. When I say there should be no untouchability, it is one thing. But if I begin to do the work of the untouchable, I identify myself with it. So this creates a new relationship. Gandhi's attempt was to change human relationships.

FJB: Does Gandhiji's attitude imply that he was for a society in which everybody was equal.

DD: Yes.

FJB: And equal in which sense?

DD: Not uniformity.

FJB: Not uniformity?

DD: Uniformity is impossible. Your colour and my colour could never be changed, unless we stage a drama.

FJB: Or inter-married. What do you think were Gandhiji's main contributions in the political field?

DD: Honesty.

FJB: Who influenced Gandhiji most in his ideas on politics?

DD: No one, except himself.

FJB: And honesty, what did it fundamentally mean to him?

DD: Not taking your adversary at a disadvantage, not hoodwinking him. It precluded all diplomacy.

FJB: What kind of political order would Gandhiji advocate most?

DD: The society of free and disciplined people. He was never concerned about forms, but the content he enunciated.

FJB: You feel that was the essence? And to understand Gandhiji, one has to think in terms of the content?

DD: Yes, I would advise you to ask this question to Vinoba.

FJB: Last time I was with Vinoba, I was in his *ashram* for a week. He had a week of silence and we communicated by writing things on little bits of paper.

DD: That is what you will have to do even now.

FJB: Gandhiji said that politics divorced from religion has absolutely no meaning, could you comment on that?

DD: Politics divorced from ethics, that is what it ought to mean, not religion.

FJB: From what you said about religion, I understand that that is really something essential in Gandhi, isn't it?

DD: Yes.

FJB: What about Gandhi's Congress activities?

DD: He wanted to convert the Congress to his way of thinking. He succeeded to an extent. Afterwards he gave up on the Congress. He left the Congress and co-operated with them when he thought he could cooperate with them usefully. Usefully in the sense to convert them.

FJB: But did he leave when he felt that he did not make enough of an impact?

DD: Yes.

FJB: What do you think Gandhiji would think about the present political situation in India? I am afraid I know your answer. Now here's a question on work. It has been said that Gandhiji's attitude towards work meant a radical break with traditional attitude. I mean, the whole question of the dignity of work, creativity and physical work.

DD: Creativity is a basic urge of human beings, you shouldn't relate it to any exchange. It ought to have no exchange value. You work because you cannot do without activity, and it is love of labour when you work for your neighbour.

FJB: And that, you would feel, is essentially Gandhiji's idea?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Physical work was looked down upon, is that true?

DD: Yes, that is why he wanted to change that attitude.

FJB: So he really wanted to bring about basic change?

DD: Yes.

FJB: What about the significance of the *ashram* for Gandhiji?

DD: Well, it was his laboratory, more or less.

FJB: Where he tried to live?

DD: Yes, translate his beliefs into actual life.

FJB: Did he talk to you about how he felt about the actual experience?

DD: As I told you I have never talked to Gandhiji about his personal feelings.

FJB: Do you know whether he felt that he succeeded in the *ashram* situation?

DD: No, therefore he changed the name of the *ashram*.

FJB: To what?

DD: To Udyog Mandir, Udyog.

FJB: You mean the Sevagram Ashram?

DD: No, not Sevagram; the Sabarmati Ashram.

FJB: He changed the name, from what to what?

DD: It was Satyagraha Ashram, he changed it to Udyog Mandir.

FJB: The *ashram* near Ahmedabad?

DD: Yes. Changed the name to Udyog Mandir, the temple of industry.

FJB: And why did he make that change?

DD: Because he saw that his ideals could not be realized there.

FJB: In the *ashram* situation?

DD: Yes.

FJB: And why could they not be realized?

DD: He said that he was wanting in certain qualities, he did not have the competence.

FJB: But what do you feel was the real reason?

DD: It was both, he as well as his companions.

FJB: And what was missing?

DD: Well, not the will, but I think the inspiration was missing.

FJB: You mean amongst the people?

DD: Yes.

FJB: What did Gandhiji mean by *swaraj*?

DD: Perhaps you have not read his points. He gave eleven points of his substance of *swaraj*, the order of society in which all religions live together amicably and there was no exploitation, and in which the hypertrophy of the state was reduced to nil—a non-exploitative society.

FJB: That was essential?

DD: Yes.

FJB: What happened to the Gandhian movement, to his ideas, after his death?

DD: Because the people did not believe in Gandhi's ideals, they wanted to use Gandhi for the purpose of gaining *swaraj*.

FJB: In terms of Independence?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Whereas for him Independence was simply a way of being human and changing values?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Gandhiji was concerned with the freedom of all men, but he was also concerned with the freedom of the whole man. Does that make any sense, if I say that?

DD: Yes, for the integrated man. The whole man is integrated man.

FJB: Integrated in which sense?

DD: At peace with himself, at peace with others, and at peace with nature.

FJB: That's the essence of the integration?

DD: Yes.

FJB: And that was essential for Gandhiji's vision?

DD: That is how Bertrand Russell also has interpreted it.

FJB: Is that what you mean by the change in values that Gandhiji wanted to bring about?

DD: Yes.

FJB: Could you just sum that up, the change in values that you feel is essential? If you could just say what you feel, what is this new man, if we can use that word? What is the man with changed values?

DD: He will live with others, as brothers, that is the new man. His neighbour is to him as a specimen of humanity, the image of humanity, with whom he has to live. So this neighbourliness will be the essential characteristic of this new man.

FJB: And what goes within? What has to go on in me to become like that?

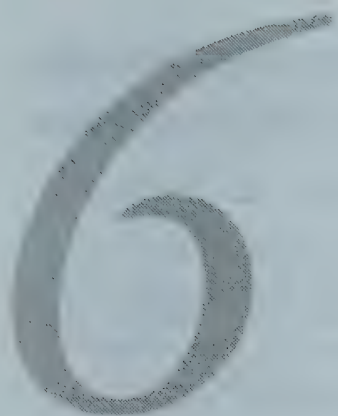
DD: You have to change yourself.

FJB: In which way?

DD: Change yourself in a way in which you will be able to live with others. That is ethics, that is morality.

FJB: And if somebody would come to you and say, 'How can I do it?' what would you say?

DD: I would say this is in you. Just get over the impediments. It is the conditioning that prevents, that interferes, so get over this conditioning.



Sushila Nayar

SUSHILA NAYAR (1914–2001) was a close associate, a veteran politician and the personal physician of Gandhi. She remained active all her life in programmes for welfare of the underprivileged, community health, medical education, social change and rural reconstruction.

She studied at Lady Harding College, Delhi, and after Gandhi's assassination, at Johns Hopkins University, USA. She was attracted to Gandhi's ideas and work at a young age. She took part in the Quit India movement of 1942 and was close to Gandhi and Kasturba.

She had met Gandhi as a child when she went to see him with her mother at Lahore. She recounts her pleasant memories, 'He made me sit in his lap and began playing with me. I liked him at once.' She was drawn to Gandhi at an early age due to her elder brother Pyarelal, who had joined Gandhi. She remained in close touch with Kasturba and Gandhi through her student days and joined him in 1939 when he went to Rajkot, where the ruling prince had gone back on his promise to grant political reforms to

his people. She became Gandhi's 'personal physician'. She soon realized that the scope of her work was much larger. In her words:

[Gandhi] was not the man to keep a doctor for himself. So I became the doctor for all the Ashram inmates and the villagers around Sevagram. I set up a dispensary in Sevagram, and learnt to train and use volunteers to fight epidemics and give medical care to villagers. In this way I was initiated into the concept of integrated, preventive and curative medical practice and community medicine which, as everyone today agrees, must form the basis of India's health services.

Since then she became an important member of Gandhi's inner circle. After completing her medical studies she came to Bombay (now Mumbai) to be with Gandhi. The freedom movement had instilled new energy in the life of the nation, and the nation was agog with unprecedented enthusiasm. At the historic meeting of the Indian National Congress on 8 August 1942, Gandhi had given the call to 'Do or Die'. He was taken into custody by the British government on 9 August 1942. He was detained at the Aga Khan Palace in Poona (now Pune) till 6 May 1944 with his close associates. Soon after Gandhi's arrest, Kasturba and Sushila Nayar were also arrested and sent to the Aga Khan Palace to be kept with Gandhi. During this period Gandhi lost Mahadev Desai, his devoted secretary and close associate, and Kasturba, his devoted wife of more than six decades. The national political scene during this period was also full of turmoil and upheavals. Mahadev Desai used to maintain a neat and authentic account of Gandhi's time in his diary. On his sudden death Sushila undertook this

responsibility and maintained the historical and valuable account of the period that Gandhi spent in detention, in this diary. It contains minute details of Gandhi's stand on political issues, his relations with his closest associates and his views on core concepts like non-violence. The diary was authenticated by Gandhi himself. Commenting on its importance, Gandhi had written, 'the public would like to know how we spent our days in this prison, what we thought or talked about'.

Pyarelal, her brother, had undertaken a project of writing the series of volumes on Mahatma Gandhi. Sushila was a steady supporter to him in this monumental work. After his death in 1982, she undertook the burden of completing the series of volumes that remains a great source to understand Gandhi, his times and his ideas. Her other books include *Kasturba: A Personal Reminiscence* and *Mahatma Gandhi's Last Imprisonment: The Inside Story*. She remained unmarried and throughout her life engaged herself in translating Gandhi's ideas and ideals into reality. She worked tirelessly to bring peace and communal harmony during the turbulent period of the Partition of the country.

After independence, she entered the political arena. She was a member of the Delhi Legislative Assembly (1952–1956) and the Minister for Health, Rehabilitation and Transport and Charitable Endowments, Delhi State (1952–55) and the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly (1955–56). She was elected as a member of the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) in 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1977. She was the Union Minister for Health, Local self-government, Country and Town Planning (1962–64) and Union Minister of Health and Family Planning from 1964 to 1967. She had

opposed the emergency rule imposed in 1975 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and had joined the opposition (the Janata party). She fought and won the election to the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Parliament) in 1977. Thereafter she retired from active politics and devoted her time for the betterment of the society.

She started and nurtured Kasturba Health Society and put her energy in developing the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences set up by her at Sevagram in 1969, and continued as its founder director till the end of her life. She was also Chairman of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust. She was also the Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith, the university established by Gandhi. She remained very active and connected with various institutions and organizations working to bring change in the life of the poor and deprived.

Her commitment to rural health care, eradication of illiteracy, particularly of women, care of leprosy inflicted persons, welfare of the deprived and promotion of prohibition, combined with hard work and discipline yielded rich and meaningful benefits for the society. Her passion to awaken the people to fight against social injustice and ills troubling the nation and zeal for self-reliant economy influenced all who came in close touch with her.

In conversation (24 February and 6 March 1978)



FRED J. BLUM (FJB): Do you have any questions about what I am doing? We want to establish a Gandhi archives, and there will be duplicates of everything with the Gandhi

Peace Foundation here. And this is for people, for scholars, and so on. Obviously we want to use it also for articles and so on. First I thought of writing a book but I decided that is too big a job for me. You have to live in India for 10 years, then you can do it. But I think that Gandhiji is very important for us in the West, particularly in the future. To me he belongs to the future rather than to the past. So this gives you some idea. I would be grateful if, before I ask you any specific questions, you tell me a little bit about how you met Gandhiji first and your association. I know a little bit about it.

SUSHILA NAYAR (SN): My brother Pyarelalji, whom you have met, had joined Gandhiji. I think I was 4 or 5 years old when some women were going to see him from our village. He had come four or five miles away. I was playing with other children when one of these women—you know how in the village everyone is an aunt or an uncle or you call them some relative—so this lady who was called aunty, father's sister—in Hindi it is called *bua*—this *bua*ji was passing along and she says, 'Well, we are going to see Mahatma Gandhi, do you want to come?' I said 'Yes', and I went along with her. After a little while they found that they could get no transport because everyone was going to see Mahatma Gandhi and there was no transport available, so I walked with her for some time but I was very small and one of the men in the company put me on his shoulder and I went to sleep. I must have been tired.

FJB: You were 4 years old?

SN: About 4 or 5. When we reached they said, 'Have you seen Mahatma Gandhi? There is Mahatma Gandhi.' And

I don't think I saw anything, I could only see some people having tea. Probably, Mahatma Gandhi had gone by that time. That was my first effort to see Mahatma Gandhi. My second effort came, I think, two or three years later when my uncle was a District Judge at Rohtak, about 50 miles from Delhi.

My second brother, elder to me but younger to Pyarelalji, had gone to be with my uncle for his studies as the village school was not approved by the family. He fell ill, my mother came there and while we were there somebody said Mahatma Gandhi was coming. So my mother wanted to go and see him. But my uncle was very orthodox, the family was very orthodox. They didn't like women going to any meeting or anything of that kind.

After my uncle had gone to court my mother got ready and took me by the hand, and went to this meeting. I was six or seven then. It was not very far. I have a very clear recollection. It was an enclosure, there was a big crowd of women and they were all shouting so much that nobody could hear a word of what Mahatma Gandhi was saying. They were talking among themselves. My mother made her way through the crowd and went near the dais. She told Mahatma Gandhi, 'I am Pyarelal's mother and I want to meet you.' So he gave some date and said, 'On such and such a date I will be at Lahore, you can come to see me.' So this time I saw Gandhiji and I heard him speak to my mother.

My brother was better by that time. So my mother took both of us to Lahore. At Lahore we went to Rambhuj Dutta Chaudhury's house. My mother left me with my

brother and went to have a talk with Kasturba. After some time, towards the evening, my brother gave me some picture books and disappeared. I looked at the pictures for some time. After some time I started looking for my mother and brother. I saw lights in one of the halls. I went there, and saw them. I ran to my mother. Probably I am a little mixed up with the time interval, I was 5 or 6 at that time. I ran to my mother. Gandhiji saw me and said, 'Oh, you don't bring shoes into this room.' So I went and took off my shoes. Then he put me on his knee and started playing with me. He had been talking to my mother about the need to wear *khadi*. My mother said that she found it too thick. In those days *khadi* used to be very thick. So he said, 'Why don't you dress this child in *khadi* she will get used to it and you are putting her in these fine clothes' and so on. 'So let me take away this child with me.' My mother said something like she was not willing to do it. She had come to ask him to return her son back to her. He said, 'Well, if you need him keep him for a little while, but ultimately send him back to me.'

FJB: And that son was Pyarelal?

SN: Yes, and she said, 'Yes, ultimately he will come back.' So I remember that night when my mother was very upset. 'I ran to ask him to return my son. I am a widow, I have two younger children and I need my eldest son to look after them and help me bring them up. And here I promised him that he can keep him for some years and send him ultimately, I made a mistake.' Anyway, that was the time I saw Gandhiji, I felt him, I sat on his knee and I really came to know him and he became a father figure.

FJB: Can you say a little bit about the first impression when he played with you?

SN: Well, yes, the first impression was, I thought he was a very nice man. The childlike smile and, as I said, he became a father figure from then on. And then, as I grew up—I was 10 or 12—for the first time my brother took me to Sabarmati *ashram* during my summer vacation. That was the year before the Salt March. And then a year later when I was there, it was decided that Gandhiji and my brother were going to, I think the Round Table Conference. My mother said, ‘Well, you see him off at Bombay. (I was there during my vacation) and I am going to receive them.’

FJB: When they came back?

SN: When they come back. And she went to receive them in Bombay. After Gandhiji came back, she was with them for three or four days. And then the political situation was very tense and it was expected he may be arrested any time. So my mother went to take leave of him and he said, ‘Why are you going away? You see us off to prison and follow us.’ And my mother decided she was going to stay. My brother went to prison, and after some time my mother went to prison. I was in school, in the boarding house.

FJB: How old were you then?

SN: I was in my teens. I didn’t go home during the vacations because there was nobody at home. During summer vacation the hostel warden said, ‘you have to go home because we need to vacate the hostel for whitewashing, repairs, and so on’. It was an interesting experience. The relatives were afraid to shelter the children of rebels. So ultimately some

friends of my brother took me in for the vacation. During the vacation my mother was released from prison. So I and my brother went to Poona to receive her and we brought her back. After that she went to prison again a year or so later.

FJB: Was that still the salt *satyagraha*?

SN: No, the salt *satyagraha* was over. Salt *satyagraha* was before the Round Table Conference. After that it was just the *satyagraha* movement that came from time to time.

FJB: Before the Quit India Movement?

SN: Yes. By the time of the Quit India movement, I had graduated as a doctor. I had, in fact, taken my examination but the results were not out when I went to Bombay just to meet my brother and Gandhiji. And I arrived on the evening of 8 August and early on the 9 morning they were all arrested.

FJB: Which year was that?

SN: In 1942. And then Kasturba was not keeping very good health. It was decided that the public meeting which was to be addressed by Mahatma Gandhi should be addressed by her. Everybody knew she would be arrested as soon as she goes there. So some of the friends, the elders there, said, 'She should be accompanied by somebody. Sushila is the best person because she is a doctor and she will be able to look after her as she is not very well.' So I went with Kasturba and as we were proceeding to the meeting; the police were there, they arrested us both. My brother was also arrested at the same time. We were taken to Arthur Road Prison in Bombay. Of course, he was taken

to the men's enclosure and we were taken to the women's enclosure. After two or three days in Arthur Road Prison, Kasturba and I were removed to Aga Khan Palace where Gandhiji already was.

FJB: Where she died?

SN: Where she died.

FJB: Were you with her?

SN: I was with her.

FJB: You were with her, so you came with her?

SN: Yes. I think we reached there on a Tuesday. Next Saturday, four days later, Mahadev Desai died in the prison. He had a cardiac arrest. This was August of 1942. By February 1943 Mahatma Gandhi held his 21 days' fast, which put a very great strain on Kasturba and everybody else. Soon after that she started ailing. And I think it was in February of 1944, 22 February, that she passed away in prison. Gandhiji had a very severe attack of malaria. He was very ill at that time. The British government thought he was also going to die and so they released him in May. After Mahadev Desai's death, I think, about a couple of months later, my brother, Pyarelal, was brought to that prison. So we all were there in that prison.

FJB: All of you?

SN: All of us, we spent exactly 93 weeks in that prison.

FJB: 93 weeks! That's a long time.

SN: Less than two years, but almost two years. And then we came out. There was the pre-Partition riot, the Partition

of India, and Gandhiji's assassination. After this I went abroad because I felt I had collected enough rust on my medical knowledge going to prison, and working in the riot-affected areas. I had not been able to practise scientific medicine during this period.

FJB: But you were with Gandhiji as his doctor?

SN: Well, when I was there I acted as the doctor. But still it is not the same thing as practising scientific medicine in a hospital with all the modern gadgets and everything. So I went abroad. Originally I had decided to leave on 13 January 1948, but it so happened something within me told me I shouldn't go at that time. So I wrote to those people who had given me the fellowship that I would come later. And it was exactly on 13 January that Gandhiji started his last fast and then later on he was assassinated. And so, it was in the month of June 1948 that I went abroad. I was away till October 1950. When I came back, first I took over as Chief Medical Officer at Faridabad, a refugee township 18 miles from Delhi. I worked there for about a year or a little over a year. In 1952 elections came, and I was persuaded to stand for the elections from Delhi. They had asked me for Parliament. I was not interested. Then these friends of mine came and they said, 'Well you are trying to work out an experiment in health here. You have this township and you are working in a group of villages round about. Delhi is a small state.' In those days Delhi used to be a state. They said, 'You will have a big town. Then you will have about 300 villages round about, do the same experiment there.' So I yielded and became the Minister of Health and Rehabilitation and Transport and Charitable Endowments

in Delhi. These were four portfolios. And after three years there was change of government and I became Speaker. In March 1955 I became Speaker.

FJB: Of Delhi state?

SN: Of Delhi state. And then there was reorganization of States towards the end of 1956. Delhi ceased to be a State, in November or December. Then in 1957 I stood for Parliament and ever since I have been standing for Parliament. I won the elections in 1957, and then in 1962. In 1962 I was appointed Union Minister of Health and Local Self-Government. Also Local Self-Government and Country and Town Planning—this was my portfolio at that time. And when Nehru died and Shastri came to power. I kept my portfolio except that at that time they had attached Country and Town Planning to the Housing Ministry. Then Shastri died and Indira Gandhi came to power and they continued the same portfolio—Health, Family Planning, Local Self-Government—all was there. Then in 1967 I fought the elections again for the third time and I won and then some changes had taken place.

I found working with Mrs Gandhi was not congenial. She had a strange way of working. If things went right, she wanted the credit, when they went wrong she wanted somebody else to get the discredit. She would agree to some things and later on she would change and make you feel that she had never agreed to it. Anyway, by 1969 the spilt came in the Congress and I remained with what we call the original Congress, the real Congress. And she formed the new Congress. Then the 1971 elections came and I lost the elections in the so-called Indira Wave. I don't know

whether it was a 'wave' or some kind of manipulation in the elections. But be that as it may, I lost, that was that. And I continued working. I was on the Working Committee of Congress O—that is the highest policy-making body. Then during the emergency I continued to work. In 1969 I had started a medical college at Sevagram. I thought there should be a living memorial for Mahatma Gandhi where we can train workers who can understand the spirit and the principles and try to implement them. My field being health I thought that was the best thing. And I was very busy with that. From 1967, when Morarji Desai became the Deputy Prime Minister, the presidentship of All India Prohibition Council had also come on me. And after Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's death in 1964, the Presidentship of the National Society for Prevention of Blindness was also entrusted to me. And with all these I had my hands full. But the oppressive atmosphere in the country was something which none of us could accept.

FJB: During the emergency?

SN: During the emergency. So we kept working, going amongst the people in the villages and trying to educate them and tell them what was happening. On 2 October 1975, we had gone to Rajghat. The police surrounded us. They wanted me, and Acharya Kripalani to accompany them. I said, 'You produce the warrants. We have committed no offence. We are conducting a prayer meeting, and addressing a prayer meeting. If we have committed an offence you produce a warrant. Without the warrant I will not accompany you.' So we sat there for about four hours surrounded by the police. And then the higher-ups must

have said, 'No, don't arrest them'. So they didn't arrest us. We came home at about 10 or 11 O'clock at night. And then, as you are aware, political changes came.

The Janata Party was formed. I fought the elections again in 1977. I fought the elections as a Janata Party member and won. I am now working in Parliament, working for my medical institution, working for prohibition, National Society for Prevention of Blindness, and I have been working since 1950 for the children of underprivileged people, particularly the untouchables and other slum dwellers. We didn't want it to be exclusively untouchables, because you want to break the barriers. So we are running for them, what we call the Preparatory School. We bring the children who have not gone to school together. We educate them till they get used to the idea of going to school. And they get into clean habits and better discipline, and so on. Then we put them in regular municipal schools. We are running nursery schools for the 3-to-5-year olds. We are running crèches for the children of working mothers and we have a mothers' class in the afternoon. The older boys came and said, 'You must do something for us.' So we have some coaching classes and some club activities for them. It is this organization for which we have to raise funds.

FJB: All these various activities seem to be very much in the Gandhian spirit. Can we come back a little bit more, when you were with Gandhiji during his fasts and also during the movement. Can you now give me a feeling of how it was, how he, the whole meaning?

SN: I think my brother has written everything about the fasts and so on.

FJB: Yes, but not your experience.

SN: No. But, you see, the experience during the fasts, in all fasts, in the early days is, one feels some kind of nausea. After three or four days the nausea passes away and then there is a feeling of general weakness, also some sort of calmness. I have fasted for a week once; that is how I know. That was because the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh had scrapped prohibition in the hill areas of the state. I felt very outraged when I saw the police protecting those who went to drink and harassing those who were trying to stop them. And I thought this was not the purpose for which we were paying taxes to the government. I saw Gandhiji in two fasts; the first was in Aga Khan Palace which was a 21-day fast. On the 10th or 11th day of the fast his condition was very critical. The problem with Gandhiji was that he couldn't drink water. As he explained to us, right from his early days in Africa and South Africa, he had been used to drinking either lemon water with sugar or honey, or fruit juice. He had not been used to drinking plain water. He used to be surprised when he saw us drink full glass of water. He said, 'I don't know how you do it.' Plain water made him nauseated. During a fast you can take nothing; no sugar, no honey, no fruit juice, and water is something you must have in a fast; without water a man cannot last very long. With water you can go on for 40, 50, even 60 days. The body consumes first accumulated carbohydrates and some fats. So long as the carbohydrates and fats are able to be burnt together, it's alright. When the supply of carbohydrates accumulated in the liver, and so on gets exhausted then the fat alone is burnt and that does not complete the combustion. For the complete combustion of fat, it is necessary to have some

carbohydrates and that is the stage when you have acetic acids in the urine. It's a danger signal and if that continues for some time then you have exhausted your sugar, and you may burn up your proteins, that is your muscles and so on, and then comes death. But the body mechanism is such that as time passes your metabolism gets slowed down. So Gandhiji did not stand the fast so well because he could not drink water; and the 10th or 11th day he was almost collapsing.

FJB: What did he drink, anything, instead?

SN: No. He took a little bit, but not enough. Then I asked him, 'You had said if you cannot drink water you will add this sweet lime juice to the water to make it drinkable.' Because the idea was not to end his life but only to undertake capacity fast. Only self-purification and self-suffering to make the British government understand his strong feelings. His strong feelings were for the people who were starving outside. Those were the days of Bengal famine, and then there were atrocities on Indians outside. There was sort of a terror atmosphere in the country; what Gandhiji had called the leonine violence of the British government. Anyway, he agreed, so I went and brought, a sweet lime and mixed it with water and gave it to him which revived him. From then on he took some sweet limejuice and then he finished his fast after 21 days. The second fast was in Delhi. This time he collapsed on the fourth or fifth day. He had been on a semi-starvation diet right from the beginning.

FJB: From the beginning of the fast?

SN: Even earlier. Because he had been very much under

strain due to the communal violence and he had fasted because both the Hindus and the Muslims were exaggerating their version. He said, 'Where is the truth, I don't know.' So he wanted them all to look inwards and become truthful, come clean, and so he had gone on a fast. On the first day of the fast there were people who were angry. The refugees, the Hindus, went around shouting 'let the old man die, but give us houses to live in'. The process of squeezing the Muslims out was going on which upset Gandhiji.

FJB: The Partition?

SN: After Partition. The refugees had come to this side. There were a lot of Muslims here. These people wanted houses. Some empty houses they occupied and the process of squeezing was there. So some others should leave. And in this process there was some general grievance on most lips. But as I said both sides tried to exaggerate and so Gandhiji said, 'In this atmosphere how can there be peace and amity? There must be truth first.' Anyway he then tried to impress on them. And when he couldn't, as the only way out, he went on a fast. From the first day these people were very angry, the Hindus and Sikhs. But by the 4th day when his condition was getting weaker, the same men and women came and filed past his cot with tears rolling down their cheeks. They would say, 'Give up the fast, we don't want anything, you must live.' Anyway, I think it was probably the 6th or 7th day, my brother has recorded it, when ultimately the leaders got together. They worked out a formula which enabled him to break his fast. It was this that upset some of those extreme communal elements. They felt that so long as this man lived, Hindus will not retaliate;

and they decided to kill him. And they ultimately did kill him.

FJB: You were with him at that time?

SN: No, I was not with him. In the state of Bahawalpur in Pakistan, the Nawab of Bahawalpur was writing letters to Bapuji saying that 'I don't want the Hindus in my state to go away. Hindus and Muslims are like my two eyes. How can I pluck out one?' On the other hand, the relatives of some of those Hindus and Sikhs came to Gandhiji and said, 'Our people are like virtual prisoners there, they have no future there unless they get converted to Islam. You must bring them out.' They told him terrible tales of how they were harassed and how they were in danger and so on.

So ultimately Bapu turned to me and said, 'Look, if you have the courage I want you to go to Bahawalpur and find out what the truth is before I take a decision.' I agreed. Just then one of the Quakers here, Leslie Cross, who was the chief of the Quaker Centre in Delhi, came in. He said, 'I want you to go with Sushila to Bahawalpur.' So next day, we started for Bahawalpur. He said, 'One day for going, one day there, and one day for coming back'. When we reached there we found that the Nawab was not there. He was in Karachi. They said he would be coming the next day. He didn't come the next day, nor the third day. In this process we got delayed. And then we got the news that Gandhiji had been shot and we started the same night. I arrived here the next morning as the procession was starting from Birla House.

FJB: It must have been terrible.

SN: It was terrible. As a matter of fact, Leslie Cross and

I had gone to Multan, a place near Bahawalpur, and the Deputy Commissioner had invited us for a cup of tea. We were having tea in this house when a woman rushed in and said, 'Look, what this world has come to, they say Gandhi has been shot.' I was standing with a cup of tea in my hand. Naturally I was upset, so I sat down. He said, 'Don't worry, we will find out what the truth is, how hurt he is; it may not be serious.'

FJB: He said?

SN: The Deputy Commissioner said. So I said, 'I don't want to find out anything; I just want to get back, so help me to get back.' So they put me in a small room. I wanted to be quiet, and they didn't tell me anything. I didn't know that he was dead. So at about 11 O'clock at night he got his guard and car ready. Those were very dangerous days. He had two men sitting with the nozzles of their bayonets sticking out from either side. Lesile Cross and I motored from Multan to Lahore. We reached there by 6 O'clock in the morning. The whole night we motored. I was taken to the High Commissioner's residence in Lahore. There a woman, whom I knew, put her arms round me and started crying. So I knew something must have happened. But I dared not ask what has happened. You know, keeping hope against hope. And then about 7 O'clock or 7.30, the All-India Radio broadcast—that famous speech of Pandit Nehru: 'The Light has gone out... No I was wrong...the Light will live a million years.' And then I knew.

Of course, after that, as I said, I felt I needed to refresh my medical knowledge. But for some time I was working

in the riot-affected areas to restore peace. Afterwards, in June, I went out.

FJB: When you look back at this period, what were, do you feel, the most significant experiences with Gandhiji? I mean the experiences during those years when you were very close?

SN: The most important experience with Gandhiji, I think, was that he was a very understanding father figure. There were people like myself who were rather young, impetuous, thought themselves to be scientists, and therefore, very much enamoured of the scientific spirit. I remember when Gandhiji was fasting in Delhi, he said, 'I have this acetone in my urine, because my faith in God is not complete. If my faith was complete, perfect, this acetone would not be there.' I tried to explain to him what I explained to you earlier; how the fat and the carbohydrates burn together and so on. He heard me very patiently and then looked at me with a very sad and far-away look in his eyes. He said, 'Does your science know everything?' I was silenced. Then he said, 'Don't you remember what the Lord says in *Bhagavad Gita*? He says, "I bear this whole universe in an infinite small part of my knee".' He heard you, he didn't shut you up. Then he tried to broaden your horizon.

On another occasion when we were in the Aga Khan Palace, one day I was rather upset. I said, 'Bapu, you are trying to make a distinction between Hitler and the British. You think that the British are better than Hitler. In what way are they better? They have committed atrocities as bad as Hitler. I have read this in history, the black hole

of Calcutta and so on.’ And he said, ‘Yes, I agree they have done these bad things. But do you remember Wordsworth’s line? Something like “Hypocrisy is an ode to virtue”’, he said. These men may be hypocrites, but so long as they profess faith in democratic values you can hold up the mirror to them and say, ‘This is what you say, and this is what you are doing.’ But Hitler does not even believe in that, he doesn’t even pretend to believe in these values, what can you do with a man like that? That is why I am giving my support to the British rather than to Hitler, because I think if there is even a hypocritical belief in certain norms and values then something can be done.’ And that is why when Indira Gandhi brought about this emergency and abolished all sort of liberties, freedom, and values that we had been brought up on, we couldn’t take it. And what is more, I think the people of India can’t take it. Generally we have been saying with good reason, ‘where is Gandhi?’ People talk of Gandhi, but they exploit his name, they don’t live up to his teachings. While that is true to a large extent, and yet something of Gandhi’s teachings has become a part and parcel of India’s being.

FJB: You feel like that?

SN: The recent elections, the way the civil liberties were restored in India, and the way in which Indira Gandhi’s dictatorial regime was thrown out, are living proofs in front of you. These people never talked, or never said, anything. They kept silent, but when it came to voting, quietly voted her out. She never knew she was going to be thrown out. If she knew she probably would not have had the elections.

FJB: Somebody said that the attitude towards family planning was an important factor.

SN: It was a very important factor, the compulsion. They rounded up men and women like animals and forcibly sterilized them.

FJB: This is unbelievable.

SN: It is unbelievable. But it actually happened. I have had dozens of the youngsters and teenagers operated to recanalise their valves.

FJB: So this really is an aspect of the whole oppression? But to come back again to Gandhiji himself, what do you feel were his outstanding qualities which you experienced?

SN: As everyone knows, his adherence to truth and non-violence. His essential faith in the goodness of human beings, the capacity of the human spirit for regeneration and rejuvenation, to get over the mistakes and weaknesses, so that he believed the worst people could be made to act in the right way given the chance. And that is what he tried, his theory, on two fronts within India on the issue of untouchability. And he told people, 'If you want fair treatment from the British and you don't want oppression from them, then it is very necessary for you that you don't oppress those within your own ranks who are weak.' And in the beginning people were angry with him, they tried to blow up his train or beat him up and tried various kinds of things. You might have read that his untouchability tour on foot originated in this fashion. There was a crowd that came to attack his car. So he got out of the car and started

walking. And then the people who had come to attack him with sticks, took those sticks and made way for him on both sides.

FJB: What was it really, was it his spiritual power?

SN: His spiritual power and the love within his heart for all human beings.

FJB: So they could really feel that?

SN: They could feel that. And he went along. And from then on he went on foot. So his message spread further.

The second experience I had of that same kind was in Delhi, before his fast. Some people came and said there were Muslim refugees in Purana Quila, the Old Fort area, in Delhi. They were in very bad shape and they wanted him to go there and visit them. So he went there. There were angry people all around. They were so angry and you could feel the blatant hostility. The man who had taken us in there was frightened. He was sitting on the front seat in the car, and I was sitting with Bapuji at the back seat. He told the driver to quickly take the car out. Bapu told him to stop. The driver also was frightened, I think, so he went further. And Bapu was very angry. He tapped strongly on the seat and said, 'stop'.

Banging on the seat, he said, 'stop'. So he stopped. Immediately the car was surrounded by angry men. You could see the sparks of hatred and anger flying from their eyes. Bapu stepped out of the car. He didn't take the support of my shoulder or his other companions. He supported himself on the shoulders of two of those people there.

FJB: Of the angry people?

SN: Angry people. And he went into their midst and asked them all to sit down. Then he started addressing them. And when he spoke they could feel the sincerity, the love, the honesty that the man really felt for them. It was true, it was no put on show. And I tell you, it was something tremendous. Where there was anger and hatred, tears started coming right from those very eyes. And then they started telling their own difficulties, their miseries, how there was no medical aid, how their women delivering had nobody to care for them, there was no water, and so on. When he came back from there Gandhiji asked me, 'Will you go and look after them?' I said, 'yes'. As I was getting ready, some people came and said, 'It is a very dangerous place, they are very bad people, don't send this young girl there.'

FJB: Who said that?

SN: Some of our own friends. And they further said, 'If you must send her, you must send her with a bodyguard.' Bapu said, 'If you want to get her killed, send her with a bodyguard, otherwise she goes alone.' So I went there alone. I went round that camp. There I found a nurse, a midwife, and some other people who could help. But, you know, God helps sometimes. As I went there, I remember still vividly, one woman had just delivered. She was having what is known as postpartum haemorrhage. I saw that she had lost a lot of blood. She was almost gasping. So I quickly caught hold of her *charpai* and put the foot on another *charpai* so that whatever blood is there would flow towards her head. I caught hold of her uterus which was full of blood. It was very flabby and soft. I kept massaging her uterus, and as I

did, the uterus started hardening. With that, I expelled the clots of blood. The women started shouting. They thought I was making her bleed, because they didn't understand. But fortunately for me the woman lived. If she had died, they would have torn me to bits. I couldn't have come out alive from there. But she lived. God helped. The action was effective, the massage was effective. And then I worked there for some time.

But I told you this story to show how he could move other people because of the truth within him and the living force of non-violence, love and understanding. He could talk to Sushila from her level, he could talk to Jawaharlal Nehru from his level, he could talk to a villager from his level – that was his capacity. For instance, when I went there for the first time, there were some cases of typhoid. He explained to me how he was treating them with nature cure and they were getting better. In my family we were brought up to argue with the elders. We were not kept in that fashion that you just accept what the elders say. So I said, 'Bapuji, it is a preventable disease. What I am interested in knowing is why you are having this chain of cases one after the other.' He explained three or four cases that he had treated. He was very smart, so he said, 'Go and find it out and tell me'.

I immediately went round. I found how they were disposing the excreta of the patients. They were burying it not very far from the village well, from the *ashram* well. I took the water from the well to Nagpur, the nearest town, and got it analyzed. I found it was highly infected. So I told him, 'It is your water and this is what needs to be done, you must take boiled water or chlorinate this water', and

he did it. He had the capacity to bring out the best in any person who came to him. He used to say, 'God sends me certain tools I must work with these tools'. And he shaped and developed them.

FJB: What did he mean by 'God sends me certain tools'?

SN: The human beings, through whom he must work. He said these are my tools, whoever God sends my way. He tried to develop their faculties and their capacities, capabilities to the best of their potential.

FJB: Something that I ask myself, how did he overcome the fear and how did he help others. This story you told me, there must have been some fear in you. Wasn't there, at that moment when you were sent there?

SN: Strangely enough, there was no fear in me for the simple reason that Bapu was there. I felt so protected, I felt so safe. Perhaps I was ignorant, I was not aware of all those dangers although other people were. But I was afraid when he sent me to Noakhali. Each one was sent singly. At that time I was afraid and I had to overcome that fear with great effort.

FJB: How did you overcome it?

SN: Right in the beginning I had seen how the women had been dishonoured, how the girls had been molested, what had happened. The village in which they had put me there had one little room, perhaps six by eight or may be even smaller, that was left unburnt. There was also a small cupboard in the room. Everything else had been burnt out.

FJB: In that village where you were?

SN: In that village. They gave me this room, they put up a latrine, a tent latrine, and a bamboo matting for bathroom. One day I had gone out to the latrine when there was some rustling in the leaves. I was so terrified. I tried to shout but there was no voice in me. And then I saw a dog come out of the trees! I said to myself, 'You idiot, why are you so afraid?' Therefore, I thought the best thing was for me to try and overcome this fear somehow. People were coming to me to seek medical aid. So I thought I will go with whoever comes to call me, and trust them and see what happens. The moment I started trusting them in that fashion and went with them, they became as protective towards me as if I was their own daughter or sister.

FJB: Very moving, what you have experienced. I would just like to follow up instead of asking questions. What you said about the fast. You emphasized this was really for self-purification.

SN: Self-purification and moving the hearts of others towards self-purification, through self-suffering. You see, he made others also feel that they should be honest and truthful.

FJB: But the self-suffering Gandhiji took it upon himself?

SN: Upon himself. Through his self-suffering, he made an impact on the minds of other people and made them realize what their duty was.

FJB: Somebody said that it had a coercive element.

SN: That is rubbish and nonsense. I think, after all, maybe their conscience pricked them, and if a call to the

conscience can be called coercion, then it was coercion. He used no force on anybody.

FJB: And fasting was very important, is that right, for Gandhiji?

SN: He called fasting the last weapon in the armoury of a *satyagrahi*. Non-cooperation, non-violent resistance, all these are various stages. The last in the armoury, when you can do nothing, is fasting.

FJB: From what you say, Gandhiji was flexible, he was open to your suggestions, when you said something and yet he had his clear point of view, is that right?

SN: And he did not force his views on you, he made you understand, he made you see his point of view.

FJB: The qualities you spoke about, how did he acquire them?

SN: My brother's book gives it all. How would I know how he acquired them? I have read about it and you can read about it too.

FJB: Yes, but I couldn't read what you told me.

SN: True, but how did he acquire those qualities? That was his mother's influence, his parents' influence, his religious influence.

FJB: That is what I meant.

SN: I have not seen all that, I have read about it, you can read the book. The things that I told you I have experienced, but those things I have not experienced, I have only read about.

FJB: Have you any experience of his sense of humour?

SN: Oh, yes.

FJB: Can you give me some idea of that because I understand he had a very good sense of humour.

SN: Immediately it doesn't come to me. But one little experience I will tell you. It is not his sense of humour so much as his realism. One day in Aga Khan Palace my brother and I were discussing as to what is a genius. I said, 'My art teacher used to say genius is 99 per cent perspiration and 1 per cent inspiration'. My brother said something else. We didn't realize that Bapu had been standing behind us and listening to our conversation. Then he said, 'Let me tell you what genius is.' He said, 'Genius is infinite capacity to go into details.'

FJB: Can you say a little bit more about truth and non-violence, what Gandhiji may call the essence of *satyagraha*. Would you say it is truth and non-violence?

SN: He said that truth is the central theme and the way to realize truth is through non-violence. Non-violence is the means. They are two sides of the coin. I may say that this is truth. You may look at it in a different way. Now, if I and you begin quarrelling it won't take us anywhere. So it is only through non-violence that I try to show you my point of view and you try to show me your point of view. That is how you can get at the truth.

FJB: To attempt to understand each other?

SN: Exactly.

FJB: Does *satyagraha* imply that there is an absolute truth?

SN: I don't know. I suppose there is absolute truth but it is not given to man to see the absolute truth. What is true today may not be true tomorrow. Science is making so much progress.

FJB: So truth is really a striving, is that right?

SN: It is, yes, absolutely. Something which will always remain objective like the perfect line of Euclid. It has no thickness. How can you draw a line which has no thickness, even the finest line will have some thickness. So, absolutes will always remain I suppose, ultimate goals towards which you can strive, towards which you can go.

And this reminds me of a little story. A little booklet I once had, unfortunately somebody borrowed it from me and lost. It was called *The Dreams*. One of those very beautiful things in which they describe a man who sees the vision of a very beautiful bird up in the sky. It is so beautiful that he just gets the longing to find that bird somehow. He goes to various wise men and people. They send him from place to place. And then he comes to an old woman and she says, 'You have to climb up on the hill'. So he has to shed various burdens that he is carrying. It is sort of an allegory, the various burdens he is carrying. Ultimately there are two or three or four, I forget, canary birds, very beautiful canary birds. They are his ambition for name, fame, and so on. Ultimately he has to shed them also. And he goes on climbing. Up to a stage there are footpaths. And then comes the stage when there is no footpath at all and he has to cut his way through. And then when he reaches up he is an old man. He is very tired and he lies down. As he lies down he sees the same beautiful bird fly

over him. A small wing of that bird falls on his chest and he dies clutching that. A little bit of truth after a whole life of striving. And someone else will take on from there and go on.

FJB: Could you say a little bit about Gandhiji and what he did in relation to women? It seems to me very important.

SN: I don't think he did anything special with regard to women except that he always said that woman was a symbol of non-violence because of her very nature which suffered in order to serve those she loved.

FJB: It interests me that he said women can be more non-violent than men.

SN: He called them the symbol of non-violence, and he said, 'To the extent I absorb non-violence I become a woman, I am half woman'. Generally it is considered a derogatory term, effeminate man, but Gandhiji considered it as the highest attainment to be a half woman. In Hindu mythology you might have heard there is an incarnation of God called *ardhanarishwar*, or half woman. So this concept is not strange to the Hindu thought. And he gave women self-confidence by making practically semi-literate. Women take up responsibilities for service of sick and illiterate in the villages.

In the first *satyagraha* in Champaran, his wife, and wives of his other colleagues were put in charge of education and health. He gave them just three or four medicines, castor oil, quinine, an enema can, and a thermometer and so on. And I remember Mahadev Desai, who was Gandhiji's

secretary often used to call his wife Masterji. Master means schoolmaster. And that was as a kind of joke that had come between them since the time when she had taught in that school.

The way women came forward to participate in *satyagraha* in South Africa was a remarkable thing. The brutality in South Africa was of the highest order, and for these women to have the courage to go forward and court imprisonment was something remarkable. The same thing happened in India under Gandhiji's inspiration. Women who had never come out from the protection of their homes, women who had lived practically behind the veil-came forward. During my childhood a police station was set up in our village and my grandfather prohibited women and girls to go for a walk in the direction of the police station. That was the abhorrence for the police in these aristocratic families. And my mother courted imprisonment twice, I was imprisoned for nearly two years and many other women from all walks of life, rich and poor, highly educated and illiterate, high caste and low caste, they all came forward and participated in India's freedom movement because Gandhiji said in non-violent *satyagraha* a woman can make as much contribution, if not more, as a man because it is not the brute force that you need. It is a soul-force, the capacity to undergo self-suffering in order to change the thinking and heart of the opposite party. And in that fashion in India nobody had to ask for any rights. In the West there is the suffragette movement. But in India when independence came everyone realized that women had equal rights, and the Constitution of India gave them equal rights.

I am not saying that all women in India are able to enjoy equal rights. I know there are vast numbers living in the villages who don't even know what rights have been given to them by the Constitution. But the fact remains that a great awakening and a great consciousness of their strength was brought by Mahatma Gandhi in the course of this non-violent movement. And he went further when he said, 'To the extent man conquers his lustful attitude towards woman and his love becomes purer, freed from the carnal desires, to that extent he is able to serve woman and help to bring out the highest and the best qualities in her.' And thus he propagated the concept of *brahmacharya*, the development of the highest that was given by God to any individual.

It was really remarkable to see how he tried to take the work that they were fit for from whoever came to him. He said, 'God sends me the tools, I must make the best use of them and shape them for the work' that was ahead in front of him. And, at that time, the work was fighting for the independence of India on the one hand and, fighting for the betterment of the life of the masses on the other, through constructive programmes. He considered constructive programmes as a preparation for political activity. People who had served in their difficulties and suffering, will be willing to sacrifice, go to prison and lose their properties and other things when need be. And that is why he attached the greatest importance to constructive work. And I feel, in a way, even today it is important. Constructive work would be a very fine preparation for political activity. Political activity has a different form; today it is elections, by and large. Of course, now and then, there may be other forms of political activity. But in a democracy, the political activity mainly

will take the form of elections. Constructive programme can be very vital to make people conscious of their rights and strengths and to use it wisely.

FJB: That is a very essential function for them.

SN: Yes, and I think we haven't done enough with constructive work. I agree. But still, as I said earlier, I think that a good deal of that Gandhian thinking has become part and parcel of the inner being of the people of India.

FJB: That is another question that interests me. How much did he penetrate the consciousness of India?

SN: Well, without being conscious of it, he has affected our thinking to a very large extent and the recent elections are an indication of the extent to which the people of India have absorbed Gandhian outlook.

FJB: When you say Gandhian outlook, do you mean non-violence?

SN: Non-violence and the capacity to exercise their right to make a choice—quietly, silently, fearlessly.

FJB: One remark that Gandhiji made struck me when he said it was more difficult to motivate people for constructive work than for participating in *satyagraha*.

SN: That is true.

FJB: Gandhi was saying that *satyagraha* takes tremendous courage.

SN: It takes tremendous courage, and it takes a tremendous amount of faith and confidence for the simple reason that the results are not quick to see—it takes a long time.

FJB: You mean in terms of constructive work?

SN: In terms of constructive work, and to have the patience and perseverance to go ahead with that.

FJB: That is difficult.

SN: It is not easy, but it is very important and very necessary.

FJB: But I mean *satyagraha*, the campaign also takes a great deal of courage?

SN: True, but then, by and large, *satyagraha* can be, as I said, constructive work was the preparation for *satyagraha*, the discipline. Gandhiji said, 'The power of non-violence is invincible'. But just as in military you need to take training to become a good general, similarly in non-violence, you need to have training and that training is the practice of constructive work on the one hand, and the various disciplines such as non-violence, truth, non-possession, conquering the cravings of palate and all other animal desires, and fearlessness, like the eleven vows that Gandhiji used to talk about, on the other.

FJB: What interests me is how much Gandhiji expected others to discipline themselves as much as he did himself.

SN: He said to the extent you succeed in disciplining yourself you will generate the inner strength. So everyone does according to his or her capacity. You see, the ocean has unlimited water. If you want to get water out of that ocean, you can dip a glass into it and drink it, just as you can dip a big vessel into it and bring it. It is all your own doing. So the power of non-violence is there, you can develop a little

bit of it, or you can develop a great deal of it, it all depends on the individual.

FJB: So he really felt it was up to the individual to develop as much?

SN: Yes. His basic thinking was that individual is a part of the little bit of that universal divine, a divinity within man, and it is that basic concept of the divinity within man which has to be developed, which has to be brightened, so that he becomes a part of the universal divine. And if you do, if you establish a connection with that universal divine, then your part becomes unlimited. I shall give you a very concrete illustration. Take an electric bulb. You put on the holder you press the switch, what happens? The connection is established with the power house that is generating all energy. So if the little bit of bulb within me can establish the connection with that universal powerhouse, the universal divine, look at the power and strength and the light that this little bulb of mine can have. But the question is, how to do it? There is no switch that you can just go and press. It takes a hard life of discipline which we call *sadhana* in India.

FJB: But I was thinking about the *atman* when you speak about the divine.

SN: *Atman*, yes, that's right. *Atma* and *parmatma*.

FJB: This is a question I wanted to talk to you about. That was very crucial for Gandhi?

SN: The whole basis of *satyagraha* is that there is a bit of divinity within every human breast. The very worst, the most

evil, have that divine spark and you can bring that divine spark to the forefront through the process of *satyagraha*.

FJB: What about the law of *karma*, how does that enter into this whole?

SN: The law of *karma* is there, whatever you have done, the accounts will be settled. If you have done something bad, if I have hurt you in my past life I will probably get it back in some form or the other. But through your *sad-hana*, through your inner development, you can develop the capacity to face the situation calmly. *Bhagwad Gita* has a beautiful verse which Lord Krishna tells Arjuna. He doesn't say that you will not have suffering in the world. But he says you can have, through this method, a state of mind in which the equanimity you will not lose in the face of the greatest calamity. In Hinduism there is no grace that you will be forgiven for your sins.

FJB: This is interesting because Gandhiji, when he was asked why he didn't become a Christian, said he didn't want to be forgiven for his sins but he wanted to be free from sin, is that right?

SN: Probably it is right, he could say it but I am not familiar with that. He could say it.

FJB: But *karma* is also related to reincarnation.

SN: Reincarnation.

FJB: How important was this in terms of non-violence?

SN: Reincarnation is a fundamental part of Hindu thinking. Water from the ocean evaporate, become clouds, go

to the clouds, rains, come in the form of a little stream or rivulet, or perhaps goes back into the soil and then is again drawn up from the well or something, and then ultimately all these streams will go back to the river. It takes a long circuitous route before it goes back to the ocean. Similarly each little *atman* has come out of that big, huge divine source and it has to return to it, but it will perhaps take many births to realize that perfection which will enable one to get back and to be free from the cycle of birth and death.

FJB: And was that very vital, in terms of the kind of suffering that non-violence implies?

SN: Well, non-violent suffering is something separate. I mean, it is a basic concept but is not particularly related to the theory of *karma*, or reincarnation. The non-violent suffering is simply related to the concept of trying to bring out the divine spark in the opponent. Now, supposing you see a man beating up a child mercilessly, you can go and fight with him. If he is stronger than you, he will overcome you, and vice versa. On the other hand, you can go and impose yourself between the child and say, 'You will beat me first before you beat this child.' The chances are that he stops, or he beats you up till you are unconscious. But having done that there is a very good chance that he won't go after that child. Chances are that he may even kill you. But then the process of thinking starts: Why did he do it? Why did he take so much suffering on himself? Even after your death that process of thinking will continue.

FJB: You mean, in him?

SN: In him. And it is this process of thinking, this process of introspection that you want to start, kindle in the opponent. You want to change his thinking, you want to change his actions; you want to enable him to see your point of view.

FJB: And this actually is happening, has been happening in the *satyagraha*?

SN: Well it happens. How those people who were opposed to Gandhiji's fight for the removal of untouchability, how they tried to beat him up, blow up his train, kill him, obstruct him in every possible way! And how when he came in their midst, they protected him! I told you the story about how with the very sticks they had brought to beat him up with, they made path for him on both sides through which he could walk, and ultimately the ideas did change. The British, in the beginning, wouldn't talk to him. In South Africa, General Smuts wouldn't look at him and then ultimately he negotiated. And the tribute that he paid him! The 100th anniversary volume, or 75th birthday volume is something remarkable. The British, how they opposed, how bitter they were in the beginning and how they changed in the end. It is not one, there are innumerable instances, change of heart does come about.

FJB: I can see that reincarnation does not directly relate to non-violence. I was wondering, was it in terms of giving a kind of inner peace?

SN: Inner peace. You see I think the idea of reincarnation is excellent from the point of view of mental health. You

don't need to be frustrated and utterly broken down if you haven't been able to achieve something that you had set your heart to achieve in this world. If not in this world, then in the next. The process will continue, you begin from where you left. Perhaps with a little effort you will come up to the stage where you left and then from there on the struggle will be greater.

FJB: Now this is something what I meant. Given this kind of confidence that we get, what about *dharma*, how does this come?

SN: *Dharma* means all this, right living, right thinking, and right action, all these are part of *dharma* – duty. *Dharma* is much wider than duty. And you will be very interested to know, in Sanskrit language there is no word for rights, it's all *dharma*. The *dharma* of wife towards the husband, the *dharma* of husband towards the wife, *dharma* of son towards the father, *dharma* of father towards the son, *dharma* of servant towards the master, *dharma* of master towards the servant, *dharma* of king towards the people, and *dharma* of people towards the king, this is all *dharma*. And that is why Gandhiji used to say that true rights flow from the performance of one's duties. If you do your duty, your rights will flow from it, and if some wicked person does not give you your rights, then the *satyagraha* is there to enforce your rights.

FJB: What interests me is the foundation or the source of the duties, or *dharma*. Are they part of nature, of divine nature of the human being?

SN: Well, divine nature of the human being enjoins a certain *dharma* to live like a human being and not like a beast.

FJB: So he had this foundation, it is not individualistic, or is that part of it, the duties come from within, is that right? Can we say that?

SN: They should come from within, but then they are also a part of the educational system, a part of the cultural pattern.

FJB: This interaction of it interests me particularly. How can the divine nature be well modified or interfered with, so to speak, through cultural phenomenon?

SN: I am afraid I won't be able to give you a straight answer to that but let me put it this way. Mahatma Gandhi succeeded in India because there was a certain cultural background in which he functioned. Tolstoy with the same ideas was not able to make a very great impact because of the difference in culture in which he lived, in which he grew up.

FJB: How would you describe that culture?

SN: You are getting me beyond my depth. Well, you see, the culture of India, the basic culture. Today there is so much of interaction and so on. It is not for self-indulgence, it's not for self-enjoyment, but to get joy by giving joy, by serving people. The basic culture is not to grab but to share.

FJB: This brings me to another question. I have talked to quite a few people and some people said Gandhiji's

sense—what you just described, caring for people, serving people—that he was very much influenced by Christianity in that respect. And others said no, this is part of Hinduism.

SN: The truth of the matter is, if you come to the essence of religions you will find hardly any difference between any of the religions. The essence is practically the same. And I remember when I was a young student in America, there was a conference, it was called the War Resisters or Peace Makers, I think. And there was a clergyman, I forget the name, but he was a very eminent man, and he made a very good speech. Then they asked me to speak and I spoke. When we came down from the dais, he came and shook my hands and said, ‘May I say you are a good Christian.’ So I said, ‘May I return the compliment and say you are a good Hindu. Because the things that you have said and the things that I have said, there is not very much of a difference.’

Gandhiji was very much influenced with the Sermon on the Mount and he liked it very much. Gandhiji was very much influenced by Tolstoy’s book *Kingdom of God is Within You*. He was very much influenced by Thoreau’s book on *Unto this Last*. So all these influences are there but there was a soil in which the seeds could grow, the basic culture, the basic training and influences of Hinduism, Jainism, his mother’s influence on him, his teachers’ influence on him, all that was there. He discovered *Bhagwad Gita* after he came in contact with the Christians and others because when he went to South Africa, the Christians wanted to convert him to Christianity, the Muslims wanted to convert him to Islam. So he said, ‘Let me find out what

there is in my own religion before I take to any other religion.' And that is how he studied *Bhagwad Gita*, and he said, 'All that I need is here, I don't need to go to any other religion.'

FJB: One thing impressed me. In Sevagram, in his room, there was a picture of Christ, of Jesus.

SN: Rajkumari Amrit Kaur used to be living there, and that really belonged to her.

FJB: That was hers? She came from a very high caste, is that right?

SN: She was a Christian. She came from a high family, one of the princely families, whose grandfather had got converted to Christianity.

FJB: I see, and she put it there?

SN: She used to live there and she had put it up there and it stayed on.

FJB: Now it is gone.

SN: Somebody must have removed it.

FJB: Yes, but Gandhiji accepted it or, you see it struck me that...

SN: During Gandhiji's lifetime it wasn't there. As a matter of fact, it was in the back room, you see the small room.

FJB: I see, so during Gandhiji's lifetime it was not there?

SN: It wasn't in that room. Somebody put it there and then they thought it was not necessary and they removed it.

You remember, there is a small room behind that room with a cement floor? That was the room in which Rajkumari Amrit Kaur lived.

FJB: And that's how it came to be there. Just one question. To come back to what you said, did Gandhiji develop in himself both the masculine and the feminine?

SN: I don't know masculine and feminine, but what he did say was that he considered himself half woman to the extent he developed non-violence, and he considered it as a matter of, mark of, pride that he had that.

FJB: That he had this quality.

SN: That he could be a mother as well as a father.

FJB: Really, in that sense, some people spoke about him as mother rather than as father.

SN: From this point of view.

FJB: I wonder whether you would like to say a little bit about Gandhiji's contribution in the political field.

SN: Gandhiji's contribution in the political field was tremendous. He came as a great hero, conqueror, victor, in South Africa and when he came to India, Indian National Congress was the instrument that he used to develop and practise *satyagraha*. There were great scholars, mighty men, very influential people, but armchair politicians. They gathered together, passed resolutions, and dispersed. What did Gandhiji do? The first thing he told these people was: 'What is the sanction behind your resolutions? The sanction can only be the will of the people. To get that

sanction you must go and identify yourself with the people.'

He did three simple things. He said, 'When you talk in English the common man does not understand you and he does not feel one with you. So, one, the deliberations shall be in Hindi or in the regional language.' Two, he said, 'You remove the chairs and spread the carpets. All people can sit together, they feel equal.' And the third thing he said, 'dress like the common people, take off your suits, get into the clothes of the common people here, coarse cloth, simple dress.' With these three things, he revolutionized Congress. Simple things, but very basic and fundamental things. And then came one after the other the various *satyagraha* movements.

FJB: Political affects the whole of life and the whole of the person.

SN: Exactly. The fundamental contribution that Gandhiji made was that life is one. There cannot be compartments, such as that you will be good, honest, and moral in your personal life but you will be immoral in your political life or in your business life. You have to accept these fundamental basic principles in your personal, political and business life, then only you can claim to become a *satyagrahi*. This was another very fundamental contribution that he made, he spiritualized politics.

FJB: This is what always fascinates me.

SN: Before that, politics was considered dirty and decent people didn't want to go near politics, but Gandhiji did something to it so that women, good people, decent

people, they all came forward into politics. A good bit of dirt has got back into it, that is sad.

FJB: It has got back into it?

SN: It has got back. There are dirty people in politics, there are dirty tricks used in politics. But what I would say is that during the last elections we tried to cleanse it and we succeeded to a large extent. But I am sorry to say that some of those principles, high principles that we hoped would be the guiding line, were not observed in the recent elections. While making selections for the states, people who had defected were given tickets. That is not moral, that's not principled. So the constant struggle between morality and expediency goes on.

FJB: What would you say the political order that Gandhiji was aiming for?

SN: Gandhiji's political order was self-sufficiency at the village level or at the level of a group of villages, maximum decentralization of power, decision making, producing for themselves, having the life that they want, the political system that they want. The ultimate dream of Gandhism which will always remain an ideal and probably will never be realized in its totality. There's a beautiful verse that comes in *Mahabharata*, one of the epics of India. In *Mahabharata*, there is a singing bard, minstrel, Narad who just carries his little *veena*, and goes all over the three worlds as they used to call it. And one day he comes to the Court of Yudhishthira. Yudhishthira gets up, as was the custom, puts the sage on the high seat and sits at his feet and then says, 'Oh *muni*, you traverse, you travel all over the world you go

to the three worlds. I would like to know if you have seen something which I can benefit from. In my kingdom I try to give justice to all, the good are rewarded, the bad are punished and everyone feels secure, but is there something more that I can do so that nobody is hungry, nobody is doing bad things?’

So Narad smiles to himself and thinks, ‘this man is getting self-complacent’. So he says, ‘Yes, oh, king. I have seen a kingdom far superior to yours.’

So Yudhishthira’s ears pricked and he says, ‘What is it like, will you please tell me?’

He says, ‘Yes, oh king, the kingdom that I have seen and that I am mentioning to you has no king, the people there, by nature know their *dharma*. There is no one to punish and no one to be punished, they protect one another.’

Now, that is the ideal of Gandhian State.

FJB: It is interesting you spoke in your story of *dharma* as it is known. This really helps me to understand what I asked, whether *dharma* comes from within. As a matter of fact, it unfolds, it evolves.

SN: Unfolds, evolves, yes. But in concrete terms I would say he wanted the small man, the peasant, the tiller of the land to be the owner of the land, to produce. The processing of the products is to be done in the village so that when they are free from field work they can have these agro-industries. He wanted education to be basic education oriented, learning to do things, and education for life, not a theoretical education. He wanted the villages to be clean, sanitary, without drinks, drugs or intoxicants. He wanted every individual to exercise his right to vote and to

participate in the village democracy, village order, and then to the extent one village cannot be self-sufficient, then let the groups of villages be self-sufficient. Then there will be cities for certain things, but let them be interdependent, the cities should not be exploiters of the village, as is happening today. Then there will be the district government, the state government and the Central government. But Gandhiji's basic concept was 'That government is best that governs the least.'

FJB: When you say that, can one express it in terms of circles?

SN: Circles that's right, concentric circles. They go on widening and this concentric circle was a very beautiful concept that Gandhiji gave in other areas also. For instance, he told the women, 'You serve your family, you sacrifice for them, enlarge the circle.' Enlarging the circle doesn't mean that you neglect your family, but they become concentric circles. Your community, your country, and the world family of man. So in that fashion he laid the greatest importance to the fullest development of the individual.

FJB: In terms of creative potential?

SN: Creative potential, exactly. He was not one of those who would say, 'For the good of many, you can sacrifice a few'. It was a *sarvodaya* concept. And you see, again that comes from the whole Hindu culture and background, the verse which is very commonly used is 'we want all people to be happy', not 'the largest number' to be happy. And this

is a prayer, that a householder, an individual, repeats morning and evening, 'I want all people to be happy'.

FJB: In a way you also describe the social order. Isn't that right in what you said about Gandhiji's attitude, I mean, the circles, the production, the self-sufficiency?

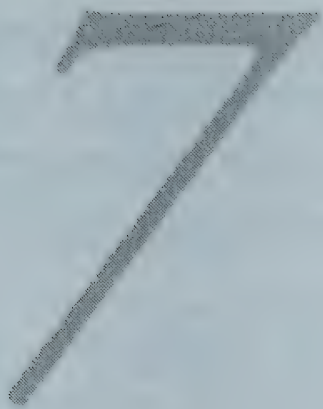
SN: Exactly, and there is another thing that he used to insist upon and repeated often enough. He said, 'Poverty, when it is forced on you, degrades, makes human beings sub-human. But the same poverty when you adopt voluntarily of your choice, ennobles, takes you to the highest level.' And so he preached, and practiced. He preached simple living and high thinking, and voluntary reduction of wants. What is it that you want? Why do you want to accumulate? The more you accumulate the more you have to protect, the more you have to guard, the more strain it is on you. These Moral Rearmament folks say, 'God has created enough for everybody's needs, but not enough for everybody's greed.' That is more or less saying the same thing. If you collect too much, maybe somebody else will be denied the basic needs. It is the same thing that comes in the form of hoarding. We are all clamouring against hoarders and profiteers and black marketers and so on. Gandhiji's idea cut at the very root of all this – voluntary reduction of wants, simple living, high thinking.

FJB: This is really the opposite of Western economics.

SN: Exactly, where the whole machinery, your publicity, is geared to making people increase their needs, want more and more.

FJB: Would you want to say something about the *yogic* experiments that Gandhiji made in Noakhali?

SN: I don't think he made any *yogic* experiments and I am not aware of any. If you want to ask about Noakhali experiments you better talk to my brother, he knows more about it than I do. I don't know. I am not familiar with that. I have read, but why should I give you second hand opinion?



Jhaver Patel

JHAYER PATEL (1907–1984) stands out as a person who made concerted efforts to change the life of the rural poor on Gandhian norms. Rooted in the soil, he developed an international perspective of planning and development on Gandhian ideals.

He left his studies at the college and joined the Gujarat Vidyapith at the age of 22 years. He received the certificate of Gramseva Dikshit from the Vidyapith in 1931 at the hands of Gandhiji, and decided to live according to Gandhian ideology. Gandhi had emphasized the crucial role these young trained people can play in the development of the villages. Young Jhaver absorbed this idea and moulded his life accordingly. He went to Wardha in 1936 and joined J.C. Kumarappa, the noted Gandhian economist, in his work at Gramodyog Sangha and stayed there for 12 years. He was also appointed as the President of Gramseva Vidyalaya at Wardha for some time. He had participated in the freedom movement and was imprisoned. His wife Chanchalben also had gone to jail. After independence

he continued with his projects of rural development. As a member of the Planning Commission and Khadi Gramodyog Board, his contribution in the deliberations and policy was important. He also worked with the ILO (International Labour Organization).

According to Patel Gandhi's special contribution is replacement of the conflict of interests in the society by the harmony of interests and of the goal of material welfare by balanced development. Based on his grounding in Gandhian ideology and work Patel visualized and worked in rural areas for a society based on social equality, dignity of labour, science oriented approach and principles of decentralization and cooperation. Inspired by Gandhi he carved his own niche in the area of the development of the villages with his emphasis on the use of science for the betterment of the villages and the need for rural industrialization for employment generation. He had done extensive work on extraction of oils from various seeds and was an expert on the methods of oil processing.

Patel had once written to Gandhi about his regular spinning in a year (almost 3500 yards a day). In his letter he also wrote that 'I am a seeker after self-realization, and I would make any sacrifice in the world to achieve it.' Gandhi, in his journal *Navjivan* referred to this on 26 February 1926, complimented Patel for his selfless work and advised others to follow this example by spinning even half an hour every day.

Patel wanted to instill dynamism and social equality in the depressed life of the villagers who have limited wealth and limited opportunities and had recognized the crucial role of science in this context. He wanted to bring changes

in the thinking and the life style of the people in the villages and conveyed his ideas by his work and writing. Simple books written by him on the subjects like food and nutrition and village civilization convey this message effectively. He wrote many books in English and Gujarati on various subjects such as diet, employment for the rural poor, village upliftment and planning. He turned to the study of *Gita* in later years of his life.

Patel was no armchair Gandhian. He wanted changes, may be small but solid, in the rural setup. He had realized that science and better management of the activities can take away drudgery of the manual work and had initiated projects for better life of the villagers. He believed that farmers need to change their perspective to their work; they have to acquire scientific knowledge and equipments and be in touch with the growing knowledge of the world. Suitable farm equipment and machinery through cooperative farming would enable the farmers to get rid of the prevailing drudgery and hard work involved in agriculture.

Patel was aware of the deep malaise of the Indian society that low social status is attached to certain types of occupations. After much deliberation and experience of working at the grassroots level he reached the conclusion that this stigma can be removed only by improving and upgrading the conditions of work in those occupations. Science, in this context, can be of great help. It can transform both the nature and the form of occupations so as to make them clean and dignified. As for example the issue of cleanliness in a village is usually associated with the sweeper class that is condemned to permanent low status because of

the work of cleaning. Patel maintained that if this work is transformed from menial work to the specialized job, there will be a solution to the complicated social problem. In such a transformed specialized job the sweeping profession will take the form of an industry, probably of that manure making. It will be like running a small fertilizer factory at village level. The sweeper can be given special training and also supplied scientific equipment to prepare different manures out of local wastes. Doubly equipped with knowledge and scientific apparatus he is bound to rise in his own estimation as well as in the estimation of the villagers.

Patel was a keen observer of the life in the village and was aware of the load of daily household work on women. It is interesting to note that he has made some useful suggestions to rearrange the routine work of women so that her drudgery would be reduced and she will have opportunities to widen her horizon. Organizing of the laundry at the village level, operating of the joint dairy farm, flour grinding and processing of cereals and pulses through the village cooperative, and cooking at cooperative farm are some ways that can provide time for women to learn about handicrafts, nutrition, child welfare and music. He was impressed with the progress of women in Israel and had the zeal to expand the world of limited activities of women in rural India.

Patel provided practical strategies for changing the rural scene. His belief that the consumer oriented perspective has to be replaced by development oriented perspective and the individual oriented perspective by community oriented perspective has not lost its relevance.

In conversation (27 February 1978)



FRED J. BLUM (FJB): I would be grateful if you would simply tell me a little bit about how you got to know Gandhiji, when you were with him, and what you did?

JHAVER PATEL (JP): As a student I wanted to know his personality in the first place. Second, his activities in the *ashram*. So I went during the vacation in 1929 to Sabarmati *ashram* for six weeks. And you know what he gave me?

FJB: No.

JP: They call it latrine cleaning. He wanted to test me whether I was really serious or only curious.

FJB: Yes, and what happened then?

JP: Then after one year I left my college studies and joined the *ashram*. But later on I joined Gujarat Vidyapith, his University.

FJB: What about the *ashram*, were you there?

JP: I was staying at *ashram* and studying in the Vidyapith. But I left both during the non-violent struggle, that is *satyagraha*. For two years it was like this, the *satyagraha*. Then in 1936 I joined Gandhiji's *ashram* at Wardha and I worked in the All India Village Industries Association for 12 years doing research in village industries. I took up two or three village industries to work on. One was the village oil press, second was the corn grinding mill worked both by man and animal, and the third was the paddy de-husking industry. So I did research on the implements of all these three. The work has also been published as booklets.

Then from 1950 to 1962 I was in the Planning Commission as advisor on village industries. There I had experience of working with the government policies and programmes for developing village industries. Simultaneously, the Khadi Commission was created because it was considered that government departmental activities would not be proper and sufficient for this programme as it affected masses. The departments are more or less aloof from the masses. There I was a member. I was in charge of an intensive area planning scheme covering a population of about 25,000 people. Intensive studies and surveys were carried out and programmes were formulated for employment, nutrition, and building up the village community's activities.

FJB: When you lived in the *ashram* in 1929, did you meet Gandhiji?

JP: Not often, because there was no personal relationship then. I was just living there. No activity was entrusted to me through the *ashram*.

FJB: No activity?

JP: No activity, I was just living there and studying in the Vidyapith.

FJB: And did you meet Gandhiji later?

JP: In Wardha during 1936 to 1948. Every week I had an hour with him. Every week during morning walks he used to discuss with me my problems or my ideas. As I happened to be the superintendent of the village workers' training school, also I was experimenting on the village industries. So I had several problems. And I also wanted his help to do

research so that he could direct me to meet somebody or to read something.

FJB: Did he help you?

JP: Yes, yes.

FJB: In which way?

JP: He solved some questions, theoretical questions. In actual practice he sent me to Maurice Friedman, an engineer, in Bangalore, to discuss the techniques, and technology of the implements. He generally discussed. Nobody can intimately direct you in research implementing programmes. Then I compared the working efficiency of the village implements as well as the mills. I wrote an article and gave it to him and he was gracious enough to acknowledge it.

FJB: Gandhiji?

JP: Yes, I have got it here. And in every Congress exhibition he announced these implements to be seen by spectators. He told about the research work done.

FJB: Can you tell me a little bit more on your personal impression of Gandhiji when you met him?

JP: First of all, he was open, that is no prejudice for or against. But he wanted to know the truth coming out from the discussion. Even if you passed remarks which he did not favour, he would not object, he would just try to examine it. I will give you an example. There was the Village Industries Association and I was its staff. I thought that this programme involved women too much and put

too much burden on the working women particularly in the villages. So I said, 'Would you consider this to be too burdensome to women?' He was shocked but he said, 'Well, let us see.' So he was musing about this and there was an all-India conference in which he put this question. He said:

Jhaverbhai tells me that this whole programme, grinding and pounding and spinning and all this, involves women too much and they are not able to look after their children, and they are working in fields and at home and attending to cattle and this and that, and how could you add to that burden?

The conference, of course, laughed at my idea but he was not against it. He just thought that there is something in it because village industry is not for just filling the belly, it is for a particular culture and if you don't develop culture through this programme there was no fun in it. He would entertain questions like this.

FJB: When did you first see him, in 1929?

JP: In 1929, yes.

FJB: What was your first impression?

JP: I was dazzled, of course. He was too great a man to go near him, great for me then when I was a student. Though we met during prayer times, there was no personal talk. When I left, I just bowed to him. There was not much personal contact then.

FJB: How did he impress you, you had some feeling about him?

JP: It was very vague. I could not analyze it. It was just the great man. No analysis then. But analysis came at Wardha.

FJB: In which way?

JP: All these questions I told you earlier. At the training centre I was in charge. I was in charge of these three industries. So, several problems arose. For example, technology. I was all the while wondering if this indigenous technology by itself would work or not, or there must be some synthesis with advanced science and technology. This was the central question I was musing upon and very often I opened this topic. Even during his talks with students I would put this question. He struck out two solutions. One was that certain processes could be centralized, which were bottleneck processes, to serve the interest of the decentralized production processes. For example, he hit upon power pulp making from raw materials for paper, handmade paper. So that was centralized and machine work while lifting and all other processes were undertaken through hand operations. So he, at least, developed one example of how to synthesize centralized processes and decentralized processes.

FJB: This is very interesting.

JP: Then there was another question, very central question even now for this country, of town versus village. He was always raising his voice that the urbanites are exploiting and suppressing the villagers. So we were exercised how to get over it. It is no use merely educating and discussing over it. A constructive way out had to be found. He gave a general formula which I found later, worked out by sociologists in other countries. The formula was that the town's

existence can be justified only if it serves the surrounding villages. I found rural cooperative townships in Israel met these requirements. So I studied several books, literature on this, and I have my little book also on this.

FJB: A book that you have written?

JP: Yes. *Rurban Community*. So if I may sum up this topic, Gandhi stood for synthesis because he wanted non-violence to prevail in the community. If conflicts keeps coming up then there is no non-violence. So to establish non-violence he wanted these class conflicts to go. He adopted several measures for this. One was the town–rural cooperative township, and another was, as I said, the technological synthesis, centralized processes to serve the interests of the decentralized processes. The third was the *nayi talim*, that is basic education. The conflict between masses and classes prevails because the masses are not learned; they are, so to say, raw persons. If you want to eradicate the root of this, then you have to ask the masses to work on the basis of science, that is they should understand the science of the activity and then follow it, so that they are not mere manual workers but brain workers-cum-manual workers. Then the root goes, the distinction goes.

FJB: Did he talk about this?

JP: Oh yes, several times.

FJB: What was his view on it?

JP: He had a scheme on this and the governments adopted it. But I had a particular discussion on this because he sensed my insight in some of these problems, and I casually asked

him. He was personally interested in *khadi*, not so much as agriculture, that is he did not pay attention to develop it scientifically and organizationally. So I raised this question, 'Why do you concentrate exclusively on *khadi* and not pay any attention to agriculture, the basic industry of our country, even when *khadi* depends on it?' He had some doubt. He said, 'I can envisage training through *khadi* operations and make it scientific and all this, but I have my doubts about agriculture being capable of yielding that result'. I had again differed from him in my book. I only said that it is his personal attention and experience. He did not find time to develop or pay attention to this aspect, otherwise *nayi talim* has the greatest scope in agriculture and Israel has demonstrated cooperative organization in agriculture. It is scientific, it is community and everything.

FJB: I was told that one of the reasons why he did not interest himself in agriculture was because he said it was not possible under British occupation.

JP: That is partial, I have mentioned that. That is only a small excuse, correct but very small, compared to the total picture, because British government could not come in the way of his scientific attention to agriculture. As it could not come in *khadi*, *khadi* was directly antagonistic to Lancashire cloth, not so agriculture. So it was his personal interest. Maybe due to his bias towards Lancashire fight and so on. He could concentrate on that, but he came from an upper middle class urban town and he had nothing much to do with agriculture, although in South Africa he did something in agriculture but that was sort of austerity, *tapasya*, not to develop it scientifically.

FJB: What do you feel were Gandhiji's outstanding qualities?

JP: As I said he was seeker more than dominating, and even from a child, as a Sanskrit saying goes, 'Even from a child you have to learn'. From a child you have to get something. Every new generation brings some more contribution. So first, he was open, that is, wanting to see something more, new. Second, he was so dogged about what he thought was true and correct that, at any cost, he would not leave it unless he saw some error in it. Third, he was much ahead of his time, that is, he saw through the world picture; saw the forces and antagonisms and the theories and the civilization of Europe.

In terms of *Gita* there are three types of people, the physical man, the vital man and the mental man. He thought, he analyzed Europe as the vital man. Much vitality—of course that includes physicality but it was not mental, mental means not intellectual, but mental means higher values. In the vital stage he saw conflicts ahead. Only when you curb your vitality and physicality and work for your higher purpose, your higher self and for society, give up something of your personal vital desires. He saw no solution to these conflicts, it would be world-wide. So, having studied these theories and literature and having personal experience of European communities and their way of thinking and civilization, he thought that India offers, in a revived modernized form. Of course, he did not believe that the existing pattern of the village community was ideal, it was decayed. But there were elements in it which you can put in a new form bringing some spirit of the West, that is the scientific spirit. The values were indigenous, and the

scientific outlook, that is what they call science and spirituality synthesized. So he wanted small communities, not the anonymous big communities where you have no personal and intimate contacts.

FJB: I would like to come back to something. You said on the one hand Gandhiji was very open; on the other, you said he doggedly stuck to his own views.

JP: Yes, he would not give it up easily to the point which he thought was true, that is what I meant.

FJB: But he would be open to explore it?

JP: Yes, always, and that I believe was his strength.

FJB: How do you feel he acquired these qualities you talk about?

JP: Well, we believe in past births. I don't think any explanation would explain his acquiring these in one birth. We believe it has been accumulated from several births and it only got stronger through conflicts he faced in South Africa. Till the time he was a student he had no conflict. But in South Africa he came across the struggles that fired his soul. And then he went on developing. So the fire, the potential, was in him, when the friction came, it burst.

FJB: Now, his mother was a Jain, do you feel that influenced him?

JP: Not much. Not Jain, *Vaishnav*, orthodox Hindu. Jain is apart from Hindu.

FJB: His mother was a Jain?

JP: No. *Vaishnav*.

FJB: It is interesting, I have heard people...

JP: No, no, his autobiography will tell you.

FJB: His father being a *baniya*, how do you feel that influenced him?

JP: That is just initial. His personality development could not be traced to anything like that.

FJB: You really trace it to reincarnation, to previous births? In this life what do you feel were the most important influences on Gandhiji?

JP: He was not very brilliant till he finished his education; from any consideration, he was just mediocre. He had no real objectives in life. He was only influenced by his mother's piousness that he would not touch meat, and would not misconduct himself and all that. That is all. But there was no outstanding mission before him till he went to South Africa. The mission was given to him or rather he developed the mission only on that soil. Before that I find no trace of any greatness or any personality development in him. That's why I say I trace it to previous births.

FJB: Do you know about Erikson's book on Gandhi called *Gandhi's Truth*?

JP: No I have not read it.

FJB: Well, in that book he says there was violence in Gandhi. What would you say to that, as you knew him?

JP: Well, I shall put it the other way. I said he was dogged. I wouldn't say there was violence but he was dogged on a point which he thought was true and that rather became vehement for others.

FJB: Did he ever talk to you about his ideas on diet?

JP: Oh, several times, because this was the experimental stage. I have written on diet and he introduced it also. We were daily experimenting at Wardha, he was staying there first.

FJB: And you were with him during his morning walks?

JP: Yes, once a week.

FJB: Once a week? Would he talk to you about diet then?

JP: There was no disagreement, so not much of discussions.

FJB: I see.

JP: I was just following him. I saw he was scientific because he had read much on diet. He had experimented it in London. So he was conversant with the new ideology of nutrition, the latest scientific knowledge. And he was inviting doctors' opinions also. So, in fact, the Village Industries Association started with diet experiments and many industries were dealing with items of diet; oil, rice and wheat flour, honey, *gur*, and several things. Mostly these were diet items. So what was the point of discussion? The scientific part was accepted.

FJB: By him?

JP: Him. And, I was also a student and followed it. But the matter of organizing this idea of diet in the life of the

community was sometimes discussed. But I don't think it figured very much. Later on, I had occasions to survey two items rice and oil, through Government of India committees. And I had suggested the closing of rice mills, got the majority of the committee also with me, but Government could not implement it.

FJB: What was the purpose of closing the mills?

JP: Over-milling of rice and removing the nutritive elements; polishing the rice that undernourished the people, especially of the Eastern and Southern parts.

FJB: Is that still being done?

JP: The whole nutrition is spoilt.

FJB: But Gandhiji would not have agreed with that?

JP: No, no. I also did not agree, and it was our programme and I had studied.

FJB: But why is it still being done?

JP: Politics. In fact, in West Bengal during our inquiry itself more licenses were given for de-huskers' mills.

FJB: What experience did you have with Gandhiji's non-violent campaign?

JP: I participated in the campaign four times.

FJB: Beginning with the Salt *satyagraha* or before?

JP: No, after Salt *satyagraha*.

FJB: Can you say a little bit about those experiences?

JP: Well, first of all, I went to rural areas in Broach district. I was staying on one farm, and was fed by the village people. They used to discuss their problems and the strategy of non-violence in the fight and so on. I was arrested and afterwards four or five persons of the village were also arrested. So we were in jail together.

FJB: Why were you arrested?

JP: Defiance.

FJB: Because you took part in the non-violent campaign?

JP: Yes, struggle.

FJB: But what did you actually do?

JP: Training people and asking them to fight against the government and non-cooperate with them.

FJB: And that was in which year?

JP: 1932. Again, after release, second time in 1933, again after release 1934. So it continued for two or three years and the last was the 1942 Quit India Movement.

FJB: What did you do then?

JP: I published an article by J.C. Kumarappa, who was our organizer.

FJB: And that was enough?

JP: Yes. I spent nine months in jail for that.

FJB: What was the article about?

JP: The article explained the Quit India policy.

FJB: What would you say is the essence of *satyagraha*?

JP: The essence of *satyagraha* is that people should develop their consciousness, do not submit to any sort of tyranny, whether it is economic, social or political, and to develop the dignity of one's person and live honourably and socially with the community. And then to understand and analyze the forces which tyrannize over you and fight them. This is the basis of *satyagraha*.

FJB: Do you feel Gandhiji's understanding of *satyagraha* changed during his lifetime?

JP: I would say rather than changing it went on developing from local issues to wider issues. He started with local issues. For example, indigo in Bihar and revenue in Gujarat, forest *satyagraha* in Nagpur, like that. Later on, as he developed strength and had confidence in the masses to follow his methodology, then he culminated his activities in 1942, asking the British to quit.

FJB: Some people say that Gandhiji's approach worked in India against the British but wouldn't work in other situations. What do you think about that?

JP: Well, the strategy changes, the approach does not. In your situation it may not be the same strategy, it may be non-cooperation, cooperation, resistance or whatever it is. It depends on the situation. The strategy cannot be permanent. But the approach of people resisting tyranny is the basis and if people imbibe, learn and practice that then the form may vary. So I don't think the principle will change because no deliverer will come and deliver you from your

troubles. As *Gita* says, you have to be your protector and develop the person. So that theory works.

FJB: Does *satyagraha* imply that there is an absolute truth?

JP: Yes, it implies. In practice you may fail. There are so many lapses and deficiencies. And the success, according to him, depended on implementation of absolute truth. To the extent there were weaknesses and lapses in it, it failed. After Gandhiji we seem to have failed, we don't seem to have achieved much during these 30 years. That is the failure because people, or rather the leaders, did not implicitly follow him. They had their reservations and tactics. They extolled him as a Mahatma, that is a saint. And, they thought people would not follow him. And they also did not follow. So his teaching did not percolate through the leaders to the masses. The masses even now are ignorant, except some individual cases where they participated in the non-violent struggle. The bulk of the masses are ignorant of the Gandhian methods, their objectives, or his ideas. So, that is why people are inert. They are not having any initiative. And now nobody asks people to have their initiative; neither the political parties nor the planning authorities, nor even the *khadiwallas*. They say, 'We will deliver you from your miseries.' Gandhiji said that people have to be up and doing and they must themselves deliver from their miseries, of course, under guidance and aid. But the current movement on all fronts is making people look to government for everything, big or small. That is a big failure. If you attribute that failure to his theory...

FJB: Yes, I understand that. I am interested in what you said about absolute truth. You said there was an absolute truth but it wasn't carried through or not expected to be carried through perfectly. But how do you know that, how do you know the truth?

JP: Well, the strategy of *satyagraha*, the main strategy, outward strategy, was non-cooperation with the evil or with the tyranny. He emphasized all the while that there should be resistance, but it should be completely non-violent, meaning there should be no ill-will towards the opponent. There we failed. We were excited towards the British and they were harassing us, looting us, and so on. So we could not rise to that concept of no ill-will or complete goodwill, and still fight.

FJB: When you say 'we', who were the 'we'?

JP: We, the followers, even myself. I nursed some indignation and hatred towards the British, because after all we are all flesh. You know they were mercilessly harassing. Their long-term policy was to exploit and keep us under subjugation. So how could we tolerate that? We were not *mahatmas*, we were trying to support and follow him and join the movement. But we were affected by our feelings.

FJB: But do you feel that Gandhiji expected too much from the people?

JP: There is always difference between principle and practice. If you don't look ahead you won't follow even a little. It is always the ideal that keeps you going ahead. So that way he could not have given a smaller ideal, he did give a big

ideal. And supposing we were affected by these ill-feelings even temporarily, we understood that ultimately it does no good to us, not to anybody. And the way the settlement was arrived at gratefully was under this influence of goodwill, to whatever extent it was developed. And even Gandhiji could not guide the masses if they had not imbibed some of his teachings.

FJB: What about the discipline he imposed on others? He imposed strict discipline upon himself. Did he expect the same from other people?

JP: Earlier you referred to somebody saying that there was violence in him. I agree.

FJB: Say a little more, will you?

JP: Well, he was goading too much, beyond the capacity of persons who broke sometimes.

FJB: Really, in the *ashram*?

JP: Also. So to that extent you can say he was violent, but not intentionally.

FJB: No, but nobody has ever said that, you know.

JP: You said somebody...

FJB: Erikson. But he didn't mean it intentionally. He said that there was violence somewhere in him, you know, hidden.

JP: No, I wouldn't say that. But he was too impatient and wanted people to rise and run and do this and that. So he would goad them too fast. That is how I would put it.

FJB: What role did fasting play in his whole life?

JP: Well, that was again a weapon. It was a weapon more for people than for him.

FJB: In which way?

JP: Well, what else could he do? He identified himself with the people and he expressed his agony through that weapon so that people became calm, not excited. So it was a pacifying weapon.

FJB: You mean it calmed other people?

JP: Yes, other people.

FJB: Didn't he fast at least at times for self-purification?

JP: Not much. I don't remember many such occasions.

FJB: Have you ever been with him during a fast?

JP: No, not fast. But in Sabarmati *ashram* he experimented with uncooked food. That time I joined, but not fasts.

FJB: Somebody told me that he felt fasting was coercive. Do you feel so?

JP: Well, the word is misused. As I said, he expected that as he himself belonged to the people, people also should cooperate with him. And he had a right to expect that cooperation from them, and he would like to sort of bring pressure on them. It is not coercive, but moral pressure; that was his belief, he had a right.

FJB: In other words he did not do it to coerce?

JP: No, no. It was natural to him that when he felt a shock he would fast. And then the other party would realize and

slowly come around. It is not coercive, coercive means intentional.

FJB: Yes, alright, I accept that. But did some people experience it as coercion?

JP: Well, there were some occasions. For example, in the last days, he undertook a fast for Hindu–Muslim unity. I was present and I don't think that was the impression.

FJB: You were present then?

JP: Yes, in Delhi. But I don't think that time also there was that impression. There were riots, exchange of population and excitement. Muslims in Delhi felt insecure. Some Muslims came to him and said, 'protect us'. So to pacify and restrain the irritated feelings of people he fasted and it was well taken.

FJB: Could you say a little bit about how Gandhiji was during a fast? You said you were with him during that last fast.

JP: Well, yes.

FJB: Could you describe him a little bit during the fast?

JP: Well, he would first of all fix up the actual point of fasting. Then he would usually pray and take his last meal, and then do silent work writing and such other things, all the while praying. And when people hear the fast has begun, they would come and discuss with him. He would stick to his point, 'Well, if you agree to this, I will give up.' So that point was taken by leaders and others and discussed.

I remember, in the Yeravada Pact, the Macdonald Award about Harijans, schedule castes, being made separate

electorates? He had challenged even the Round Table Conference telling that if you create separate electorates, I will fight with my life. That was his word, and he decided to fast. Then people were not happy. Jawaharlal Nehru and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and others were in other jails. Sardar was with him, of course. So daily there were conferences and parlays. Ambdekar was the architect of the opposite demand. He would stick to his demand, and extract the hardest terms from Gandhi. Gandhi said, 'You take the whole thing, 100 per cent, I don't want anything. Ask the schedule caste people to get jointly elected.' So Ambedkar was prevailed upon by wiser counsel and ultimately there was this pact.

This was much exercising everybody and he was sure to die. But he believed in God, that is the evidence. He fasted several times in Delhi also. First was the one for Hindu-Muslim unity, for 21 days. He undertook long fasts several times. And doctors were puzzled. They examined his pulse and they would say he was going and sinking and so on. Next morning he would revive and survive with strength. So people were puzzled and his only answer was that it was God's will. 'He wanted me to do something for him and I am in his hands completely.'

FJB: Is it right that Gandhiji felt that the source of his power was self-purification?

JP: Not much. Partly, it was God. Self-purification is negative. Self-purification gives you the background to rise consciously. Otherwise it thwarts, it obstructs. If you are not pure in your nature—nature includes intellect also—they thwart and they obstruct your vision to have relation with

higher self. So that was only preparation, to be pure is only a preparation and there is not much force in it. The force is the higher self, and that higher self acts if you are pure.

FJB: What about *brahmacharya*, what did that mean to Gandhiji?

JP: Well it was his personal reaction. He was not balanced, he was too much given to it. The South African struggle made it impossible for him to live that old habitual life. The immediate cause was that, and ultimately of course when you say purity, this is one of the items.

FJB: You mean *brahmacharya*?

JP: Yes, it is one of the items, main items, you dissipate your energy using that force, or wasting that. So he gathered it up and utilized it for a better purpose. He worked till the end of his life full-time.

FJB: Are you familiar with the experiments he made at Noakhali?

JP: What particular point?

FJB: Well, really, the sexual experiments.

JP: Not Noakhali, that is Sevagram, I believe.

FJB: What about Sevagram?

JP: In Sevagram he used to sleep with young girls just to test whether any reaction comes to him or not. And it was objected to by *ashramites*. Kishorelal Mashruwala, A.V. Thakkar and Narhari Parikh openly opposed it. But he stopped that afterwards.

FJB: But why did he do it?

JP: Just to test. As he said, 'Whether I am free from these impulses or not, whether I am affected at all, or whether I am just numb about it.'

FJB: And why would anybody oppose it?

JP: Well, it was playing with fire, that is all the while the hypocrisy has been practised in this way by the so called high souls in all temples and *ashrams*. So even a saint should not play with fire like this, that is play with girls. And another point is, what is the effect on the object of experiment? You may feel that you are safe but the other object, that is the girl, feels that she is experimented upon in this sense and it is humiliating to her also. She is a victim of his experiments, it is very humiliating.

FJB: Did I rightly understand you when you said that this was done in temples?

JP: All temples, I believe, are corrupt. Mostly, I won't say all, but most of them.

FJB: And what does that mean that they are corrupt?

JP: Sexually. They keep, in Southern India and other places, they keep maidens, I don't think any temple would be pure and simple, they misuse their position, that is to say.

FJB: For actual sexual purposes? Not for Gandhiji?

JP: No, no. But the experiment was disliked even by me, I tell you. The reason I gave is, that the person experimented upon is humiliated.

FJB: Did he ever talk to you on this?

JP: No.

FJB: You felt it was wrong?

JP: I agreed with those who opposed.

FJB: Was that also their main reason they opposed?

JP: Both. It would leave a bad precedent and I don't think they gave the second reason. And they publicly announced all that.

FJB: How did Gandhiji overcome fear in himself and how did he help others to overcome fear?

JP: Well, it developed because he was very much afraid of several things. Till the Pretoria rail car incident, that is when he was dragged out, he was mortally afraid, but then he said, 'Now even if I do anything I am going to die'. So he became reckless. That was only the beginning. And an occasion arose, that is fight with Smuts. So perhaps the struggle itself developed that strength.

FJB: And how did he help his followers?

JP: It catches, you can't preach fearlessness. They saw the example and they were imbibed.

FJB: So that was really the main influence? I am interested to see Gandhi in terms of the whole Indian world view. What importance do you feel did *atman* have for him?

JP: *Atman*? That is his soul?

FJB: Yes, you know, the whole idea of *atman*, one's soul.

JP: In our terminology there are three stages. Individual involved in nature, identified with nature, does not regard himself as detached from nature. Nature includes everything, body and intellect and feelings and all that. Then, when he becomes detached, that is when he becomes a witness to nature's functioning and remains unaffected by its functioning. But when he can control, reject or guide it, that is the second stage. The third was the individual person, lower one, this is soul, detached. But detached doesn't mean that he controls; he detaches. But when he uses the nature in a controlled way, a masterly way, then he becomes the master.

FJB: He being the person?

JP: He being the person. And he uses the nature and all that in his own interest, that is guiding the destiny of nations, and persons. So he believed in three stages. I believe he was aspiring to reach the third stage as quickly as possible and he said his own purpose in life was that.

FJB: So that was very important for him?

JP: Well, that was really his source of strength or whatever it is. As I said, at the time of the fast he believed in that force.

FJB: Another question that interests me. In India one has the feeling of a different time sense, that the infinite, eternal, is nihil. Do you feel this was true for Gandhiji?

JP: No. 'Eternal is nihil' is Jainism. They say *nirvana*, that means extinction of the ego. When the ego goes nothing

remains, there is nihilism, there is no positive third stage force, as I said. But Gandhi deferred there, that is he believed in the third force actively guiding the world.

FJB: The third force being?

JP: The *parmatma*, that is the God. The world is not nihil, that is, it is not negative and blank and nothing else, it is a positive force, it is guided by a positive force, and there is evolution. He believed in the theory of evolution of man and that evolution is guided by God himself.

FJB: What about the law of *karma*?

JP: It had certain effect, but you can overcome it by further discipline. It is not a permanent binding factor.

FJB: But was the law of *karma* important for Gandhiji?

JP: The law of *karma*, no. Up to a certain point.

FJB: Up to what point?

JP: Up to a point but that was much early. The force came out, then there was no *karma* for him. He controlled the *karma*, that is the force. *Karma* means habits, past habits. When you take charge, the past habits do disturb you. They can't altogether stop you from progress, so you can control past habits. You can go on suffering also at the same time, due to your past habits. But for future, you are the maker.

FJB: And that is what Gandhiji really believed?

JP: And that is what made him really. If he had believed in past actions, that is the habits, then he would not have developed into a pure soul or pure *Mahatma*. He would

have remembered the sexuality and other things, and he would have rolled in that. But knowing all the weaknesses he decided, 'These are weaknesses. All right, I will start struggling for the time being and get over them.' So that is past action, habits, it did trouble him for some time but ultimately he triumphed.

FJB: What about the *Gita*? What did the *Gita* mean to him?

JP: Well, *Gita* is really the crux is these three stages of the person and others are just urges to understand this trinity. So the first, involved in nature, second, detached, and the third, master. So these three *purushas*, these three persons rolled into one, developing one from the other, that is the crux of *Gita*. That means there is a force which is in charge and if you follow more and more, forget your limited personality which is incapable, limited and attached, rise to the second stage, then you become more forceful, more powerful to act, and then to the third, when you are completely in charge and master to act. So that is the greatest force. And how to realize that? First understand the nature in all its aspects and implications, then control that nature and be detached and rise to the positive creative force. That is the *Gita*, in short.

FJB: And that is what it was for Gandhiji too?

JP: Yes.

FJB: What about the law of *dharma*, what about *dharma*, what did that mean for Gandhiji?

JP: *Dharma* again means 'according to the state of your development'. There is no one *dharma*. If you are a person

involved individuality, then your *dharma* is to struggle with nature and life. If you are a soul detached, your *dharma* is to rise in force, so these are the equipment, the methods, the resources to be used to rise to this highest force. *Dharma* can't be really translated. *Dharma* is the functioning of oneself according to one's nature.

FJB: That nature is given to you?

JP: Given to you, you can control it. If you are under the nature or you are over the nature, that is the point.

FJB: Under the nature?

JP: There are three types of natures, as I said; the physical man, the vital man, and the mental man. So first of all, try to be the mental man, establish yourself permanently, and peacefully. Then you can clearly receive the *bimba* that is the rays of the higher force. So these three stages are for you to pass through.

FJB: One other aspect of the Indian world that I think is important for the West is to understand Gandhiji. You know, in the West, we think very much in terms of opposites, black and white, good and evil, and light and darkness. Now is it true that you would not think so much in terms of opposites, but more like the lotus flower which grows out of dirt and darkness but it's a beautiful flower?

JP: To put it again in the same terminology these opposites belong to the nature, they don't belong to the soul. Now, if you are drawn away by opposites, the soul loses, the nature gains. So you use both, but why do you get overcome with it? You use both, use the opposites, one white, one black.

Both are useful, both are two aspects of the same coin, but why be overcome by these opposites? You become master of the opposites.

FJB: Free flow of movement?

JP: Yes.

FJB: At some point Gandhi said that God is Truth, and later on he said Truth is God. Can you comment on it?

JP: Well, I have written in my notes on this very point. He was here influenced by the Buddha. Hinduism believes in personal God. Aurobindo Ghosh also believes in personal God. Here is another Bengali, his guru, Sri Ramkrishna Paramhans. Everybody believes, *Gita* itself believes in personal God. Why do we believe in that? Because then only you can pray and adore and love and so on. If there is no person, what do you love, and what do you adore and pray for, pray to? So, just to evoke the best feelings of yours to a higher purpose you have to believe in a personality. If you don't believe in a personality you do penance and be pure. So Truth is God means you do penance and be pure. And God is Truth means you devote yourself to somebody, take somebody's shelter and rise. So there is this distinction of the methods, and, according to me, he was influenced more by Jainism and Buddhism here, and both the masters, that is, Mahavir and Buddha, believed in nihilism that is nothingness after liberation, so they did penance and rise.

FJB: You mean his thought moved from a personal God?

JP: No, apart from that. Because to say Truth is God means impersonal.

FJB: That's what I meant, from the personal to the impersonal.

JP: Ah, yes, yes.

FJB: What do you feel was the essence of Hinduism for Gandhiji?

JP: Really speaking he was confused here. God, he should have believed in, and he should not have said 'Truth is God'.

FJB: That was not Hindu?

JP: Not Hindu.

FJB: But he always remained and felt like a Hindu?

JP: Yes, but as I said that is confusion. He believed in that, he pronounced this statement also.

FJB: What was the essence of Hinduism for him?

JP: For him this is the impact of Jainism. He did believe in Hinduism, that is God, because otherwise he would not have said, 'Now God is guiding me and I just depend on him'. He said that, he believed it also.

FJB: That is Hindu?

JP: That is Hindu.

FJB: Where did he disagree with Hinduism?

JP: I don't find anything.

FJB: But I mean untouchability.

JP: It's not Hinduism, it's a curse, it's a growth, after-growth, it is a social evil.

FJB: Not the essence at all?

JP: Fundamentally he did not voice any difference, nor did he feel any difference. But as I say, he had this influence.

FJB: That's interesting. But when you were in Sevagram, were you in his little room at times?

JP: Several times.

FJB: Was there, at that time, this picture of Jesus or not? When I was in Sevagram first in 1965 there was this picture.

JP: I think there was. Miraben put it there, I think.

FJB: Well you see, I am interested in this because I went to Sevagram now, I was there ten days ago, the picture has gone and I asked why has the picture gone? I assumed it was like that during Gandhiji's time and that's how it should be, I mean it was like that. And I was told that there was a disagreement on it.

JP: With Gandhiji?

FJB: No, no. Not with Gandhi. I was told that Gandhiji had a Christian secretary for a short time.

JP: Miss Slade herself was secretary.

FJB: Yes, but it was not Miss Slade.

JP: In fact, Sevagram was pioneered by Miss Slade and Gandhiji followed her.

FJB: Yes, but I was told there was a princess or somebody.

JP: Oh, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

FJB: And she was Christian?

JP: Yes.

FJB: And that she put it there and Gandhi said all right?

JP: Maybe, I don't know about that.

FJB: I didn't know either, but you saw the picture there?

JP: Yes, yes.

FJB: Because I asked Pyarelal two days ago and he said it was never there, and I said how could it be?

JP: Who moved it afterwards?

FJB: Yes, that is a mystery. But what I was told now that they couldn't agree what to do, and Vinobaji said take it away.

JP: Vinobaji must have said because he could not understand these wrangling. Vinoba is not against Christ.

FJB: No, no, I never implied that.

JP: No, not you, nobody would say that. But he would see these people quarrelling and say, 'a bone of contention, let it go'.

FJB: Can you say a little bit more about Gandhiji's attitude towards Christianity? Did he talk to you about it?

JP: No.

FJB: What was your feeling?

JP: That topic was not under consideration at any time during Sevagram. He used to come to our Vidyapith and

taught us Bible. But one point strikes me now when you say this, he coined the word, *sarvadharmasamabhava*, that is equal regard for all religions and there he accepts Christ's contribution, Mohammed's contribution, Jain, Buddh, Hindu, Parsee, so these are different approaches to reaching the same goal. Maybe some have evolved finer, some may have evolved rough or there may be degrees and and so on, again according to the circumstances because religion also is related to the community. So that way, depending on the growth of the community and the environment, it takes different shapes and methods also. But the purpose is universally the same.

FJB: What about the prayer meetings you attended, how were they related?

JP: This idea was there. And it contained songs from all religions.

FJB: Did everybody sing them?

JP: Yes everybody sang them.

FJB: Everybody participated. Did everybody know them? I mean would you know Muslim songs, Christian songs?

JP: Yes. Everybody knew it by heart because it was a daily routine.

FJB: You know the kind of things we talked about. Could you say how they relate to Gandhiji's ideas on the social order and society?

JP: It is a long subject because it brings communist, socialist and Gandhian theories. It brings out the relationship

between the individual and the society. Communists believe that essentially man is a creature of circumstances and either he is strong and to be curbed, or he is weak and to be protected. There is a conflict and conflict has to be suppressed, not eradicated. Therefore man is not the maker but is made by circumstances. Gandhiji believed that their slogan is 'Good Society'. By society they mean government, because purely social experiments were termed as utopians by Marx and Engels. Now, Gandhiji's slogan was 'A good man in a good society.' A good society is made by only good men, the good man is the basis of good society and a good man is the mental man, I told you.

FJB: The highest?

JP: The mental man of the third stage. So everybody has to aspire to be a good man. A good man would curb his personal instincts in the interest of the society. He would be self-controlling himself. There should be no outside authority to control him and will do good work or behave properly. So his emphasis was on the good man and if all men were good, then naturally the result would be a good society. Therefore he did not want any coercive power of the state to keep community behaving properly. He believed in the small community working on the basis of mutual respect, interest and control. He dreaded the power of the state because that would kill the personality. What good do you get if you keep them not only innocent but also suppressed and without personality? So man was the supreme consideration for him and society exists for the good of man. This was the distinction he made.

But socialism means that man is a creature of circumstances, sarvodaya means that man is the master or maker of circumstances and he should be allowed to develop his personality, and circumstances should be so created that he feels at ease, has freedom of environment, no outside authority to control and coerce him. So this makes a difference, the society is self-regulated.

FJB: Earlier we talked about the social order and I wonder whether just what kind of society did Gandhiji visualize and work for? What was his vision?

JP: In one word it was decentralized society. Now all the trends, whether of the capitalist or of the socialist, or of the communist, all trends drive towards centralization, in the name of science and technology and efficiency and what not. Well, that dehumanizes the person. He is working in an administration and he is not by himself, he is not left to himself, he is ordered and administered and managed. So Gandhiji evolved the concept of self-employment, man should be self-employed.

FJB: All men?

JP: All men. And they should be helped through cooperation but he should not work under somebody. Cooperation is between equals. So he is equal to all, he is assisted by groups, by organizations, but he is self-employed. Now a self-employed person has opportunities to exercise his talents and his skills and his aptitudes and everything, and he develops as a person. So there are again divisions whether you emphasize production or whether you emphasize the personality development of man. And if you have to

subordinate one, which will you choose? So, as I said earlier, man was the supreme consideration to Gandhiji, and everything should lead to this end. So he used man as a means of development and he used man as an end of development. Means and ends collide here.

FJB: What about competition, does that come in at all?

JP: He did not want competition. He termed this as a pyramid, pyramid in which the bottom has to support the weight of the whole structure. He wanted, he termed in a poetic way, the oceanic circle. The concept of his society was oceanic circle in which the centre enjoys the majesty of the expansion. As the circle expands it enjoys the majesty more and more, but it is not crushed by outside circles, while in a pyramid the top crushes the bottom. So he gave this poetic name oceanic circle as against the pyramid. So he did not want competition.

FJB: He attached a great deal of importance to trusteeship, could you say a little bit more about that and how trusteeship is related to the ultimate power?

JP: Now it is a misconception to say that he alone was for trusteeship. The communists are the greatest trustees of the nation because they take full charge of the lives of the people and they act for the good of the people. So they are the greatest believers in trusteeship. But the difference between Gandhian trusteeship and the communist trusteeship is that the communists regard the state as the trustee of the people while Gandhiji believed that every person is a trustee of the society's welfare. And every person should use his capacities, talents or whatever qualities he possesses over

his own needs. He is a trustee of the society; he should use his talents and capacities for the good of the society after he meets his own needs.

FJB: Not only the employers, so to speak?

JP: No, that is a misnomer. He did not, in fact, want centralization. There was no question of employer and employee, as I said, he wanted self-employment. He started with pleading with employers, that is different, but his theory was not employer–employee. He believed in self-employment, and even that self-employed person should work as a trustee of the society. He should not cheat, he should labour hard, and he should take the least reward. So real trusteeship was, according to him, each person working as a trustee of the society.

FJB: He attached a great deal of importance to the constructive programme, and you have been, of course, very closely connected with it. Do you feel what you said earlier is the essence of what you want to say about it?

JP: Constructive programme means you become constructive-minded in contrast to the conflicts. You understand the differences in human society, the natural differences. All people are not made equal, nor are they born equal. There are differences according to the development of the person in past births, as I said. But differences need not bring quarrels and conflicts. So constructive suggestion is that you reconcile the apparent differences and bring harmony, that is constructive approach. Don't bring in the theory of conflict, he says, work for harmony with all the differences of race, language, culture, politics and

economics. The approach should be to work and bring about harmony, and harmony will bring peace and happiness. So his constructive approach was that. Now you don't want me to give details of the constructive programme? I am talking only of the approach.

FJB: Yes, the basic ideas.

JP: Yes.

FJB: Is *khadi* of the same...?

JP: It's a token, it's one item.

FJB: What about technology?

JP: Here again there is a misconception that he was rather conservative. That again was a time strategy. Time strategy, because everybody was blindly following the so-called advanced technology and it was a tide which had to be put a stop to. So he reverted to the original, indigenous, simplest technology which man can handle in the villages.

FJB: By time strategy you mean something that was growing out of that particular time?

JP: Yes.

FJB: It was a response to one side?

JP: Yes. He began with simplest things and gradually started research in situations, I was in charge of one or two.

FJB: That interests me very much to know that he started that.

JP: Yes. He announced a prize of one lakh rupees for the best model of *charkha*. So it is a misnomer to say he was

against technology. But his primary idea was that man should not become slave to technology. He should be master of technology; he should control it, command it, and use it for his purpose. You should not be a mere spoke in the whole wheel. That sort of technology was killing to persons, so he did not want it. He wanted simplified efficient decentralized technology.

FJB: If Gandhiji had lived long enough to develop in India the kind of social order that he really wanted, what would he have done? Is there anything you want to add to what you said?

JP: No. Two strategies he had to work out. First, the rural cooperative, rural township; because he had to solve the primary conflict of rural–urban relations. So he had to evolve the organization of rural–urban relationship. Now that sociologists the world over have evolved this, he would have gladly accepted it, this cooperative rural township serving a group of villages, both ways, it was not a one-way traffic. Second, this synthesis of technology he had to work out, I gave you the example of the paper work.

FJB: Synthesis?

JP: Synthesis. In each industry, in each line he had to work out synthesis technologically. Third, he had to work out the relationship of the village republics and the central government. So he said ‘let the primary unit do as much as it can, what it cannot do must be done by the *taluka*, and so on’. So the residual powers and functions were at the top. Residual, not the overall. So all this political, economic, technological and sociological synthesis had to be worked

out and evolve patterns, that was his function. And I am not boasting but I am on it, this synthesis working out.

FJB: I want to read the books you have written. You touched upon the question of how much of Gandhi's ideas were related to the social and economic conditions of India at this time. What would you say about that?

JP: The first major impact was destruction of village industries and handicrafts. That really uprooted the village man. The skills were gone, the luster in his eyes was gone, the diversification gone, the mutuality of artisans and farmers and labourers gone. Trade became just a one way traffic draining off talents and artisans, the villagers became mere drudges. He had to solve this basic problem and he had to rouse consciousness in this sort of people. It was a tremendous task. It was humanly impossible. So he had to put life, trust, self-confidence and so on in this sort of people. The urbanites were cut off from the masses. They were not interested in anything except their own career, little own personal career. And he had no faith in this sort of urbanites. He worked on the masses directly. The Congress before Gandhi was upper class Congress. At Christmas time they would meet in vacation and give discourses and disperse. There was no action, no follow-up. It was Gandhi who introduced mass impact, mass attitude, mass programmes and mass contacts and those intellectuals left the Congress. When Gandhi entered Congress they left because they felt rather hurt that they no more had any place.

FJB: I would like to conclude with a question about the social order by asking to what extent do you feel the kind

of things you said were related to Gandhi's world view and his ideas on religion?

JP: Religion, culture, economics and politics, these are not different aspects. These are aspects but not compartments of life. He believed in unity of life. So economics should serve religion, religion should serve economics, religion should serve politics, religion should serve sociology, and so on. So they were not different things for life, it is all made of one stuff, the whole attitude should run through all compartments of life, they are not compartmentalized.

FJB: Let me ask you a few questions about women. It has been said that Gandhiji took an attitude towards women very different from the traditional one?

JP: No. In fact our Aryan civilization, there is a verse to the effect where women are worshipped there God dwells. There is a saying 'women are worshipped always in the culture'.

FJB: In the Aryan culture?

JP: In the Aryan culture. Yes. So Gandhiji did nothing different from that culture.

FJB: But that was a long time ago.

JP: Yes. But I am talking of culture, not the practice. He followed the tradition.

FJB: But it was quite different from what Gandhiji said that existed at that point.

JP: Yes. As I was saying, in fact, it had deteriorated, this ideal. But the ideal was there, and there were examples of

women excelling in different fields of life. So the tradition is not different, he didn't start any new tradition, he rather revived the ideal tradition.

FJB: He revived the ideal tradition. At sometime Gandhiji felt that celibacy was superior to marriage?

JP: Well, marriage ordinarily means a license. To counteract that impression he emphasized restraint even in marriage. It is not that celibacy is superior to marriage; but restraint, even in marriage, in the interest of happiness, peace, energy and quietness and so on. So, to lead a better life, if you overdo things not only in celibacy, but in everything, eating, drinking and everything, then you lose your perspective, you lose your own control and your personality deteriorates. The whole approach was that of sublimation.

FJB: Gandhiji said that women can be more non-violent than men. Could you comment on that?

JP: That is because physically she is not very aggressive, and mentally submissive and loving too. She has to love her children and husband. So she is more loving and serving than becoming aggressive and controlling. Men like to be aggressive and controlling. And third, the occupations. In occupations, man has to be daring and enterprising and take risks and so on. He should not be sober minded. Otherwise he can't prosper. So the vocations, the occupations, the functions of the two, differ in this way.

FJB: But non-violence has nothing to do with submissiveness.

JP: No, no. Submissive, as opposed to aggressive. If you are aggressive and if you submit, not in the wrong way, it

is a relationship of mutuality. She submits not to another person but to husband or to children. All right, she is more bearing, she can bear more and suffer more. That is what I mean by submission.

FJB: And 'suffering is important, important in my life', could you say a little more about that, about the importance of suffering?

JP: Generally when two persons fight, there is resistance. And there is infliction. While you separate the wrong-doer from wrong action, you oppose the wrong action, but you, all the while, continue to love him and think of his good, not inflicting injury on him. So only you have to suffer. In that sense suffering is non-violent, it is not inflicting injury on others, and that evokes the best in you, best in the opponent.

FJB: And it is also said that Gandhiji in himself combined the feminine and the masculine, what would you say about that?

JP: I would say he was father in the head and mother in the heart, because he was all compassionate. He could not bear the suffering of any single person whom he knew. I shall give you one example. In Sevagram he observed silence. Now that silence was very peculiar. It was not merely not speaking, but it was not taking initiative on anything, that was the silence. He would not take any initiative during that week, whatever comes to him he would work on. On one of those occasions I went to him. He was getting something massaged. It was unusual. He always got massage in bath. But this was afternoon and I was surprised why he

was getting massage in the afternoon. I asked him, 'What happened to you, why do you get massage?'

He said, 'Don't you know, Nandlal's daughter had a misfortune and I can't bear it and it gave me this pain.'

Look at that typical attitude. So that is, as I said, womanly, motherly, or feminine attitude, or whatever you call it. He would take the hardest decisions if necessary. Even if you cry and weep he would not listen, he would take very cruel decisions sometimes.

FJB: Cruel in which way?

JP: For example, he would not tolerate the nonsense of his eldest son Harilal and he would allow him to go away from him if necessary. That was the patent illustration. He was very cruel but all because that fellow was a rascal.

FJB: Cruel, in what way, by not having him with him?

JP: Yes.

FJB: Did Gandhiji ever talk to you about his feelings on caste?

JP: He believed in division of functions but not social divisions based on occupations. And there was no question of any superior caste, one functioning at the head and another at the chest and another at the legs and so on. This reason was sort of a capitalist monopoly of the upper classes. It was a class conflict idea, it was not a harmonious idea. So he could not, being a non-violent person, tolerate any distinction based on occupations, high or low. He was all for equal treatment. Functioning may be different but

he would not countenance any difference in the treatment and attitude of one man towards another.

FJB: He once said if he was to be reborn he would like to be born as a Harijan.

JP: Yes. Because Harijans are the most harassed and suffering persons and he would like to arouse their consciousness. Being one of them he would identify himself with the group and that is the best way and best strategy to arouse their consciousness. That showed only his anxiety to serve those people.

FJB: What do you think were Gandhiji's main contributions in the political field?

JP: He did not compartmentalize life. He said politics should also be religious. Religion, politics, economics, all walks of life should be based on one value and there should be neither crookedness nor secret nor other methods in politics. It should follow the general principle of unity of life.

FJB: Who influenced Gandhiji most in his ideas on politics?

JP: This approach on unity was his own. But Thoreau's one sentence, 'that government is the best which governs the least' influenced him to a great extent.

FJB: What kind of political order did Gandhiji consider to be the best?

JP: The village republic, the basic unit of government.

FJB: The village republic, how do you call it in Hindi?

JP: *Gram swaraj*.

FJB: Gandhi said that politics divorced from religion had absolutely no meaning.

JP: Yes, I have been telling you the same thing.

FJB: Could you tell me a little bit more about Gandhiji's Congress activities?

JP: His whole approach was rousing the consciousness of the masses. He used that platform and through that platform he attracted the intellectuals and the leaders of society, turned them into servants of the masses, put them on specific jobs—some on constructive work, some on organizational work, some on diet, some on Harijans, some on women, and so on . So he called upon all the so-called elites to turn their energy towards the service of the masses and he energized the masses. That was his strength in politics; that was his strength in economics and in everything.

FJB: What do you think Gandhiji would think about the present political situation in India?

JP: I don't think he would be happy. But he would probe into the reasons why this situation has come to pass. And I think he did not take up the village problem, as I was telling you, the agriculture problem. He took up the *khadi* problem which did not touch many of the villages. The *khadi* problem touched mostly the urbanites. If he had taken the basic industry, the agriculture, he would have revolutionized the minds of the farmers and the farm

labourers, whereas within the whole struggle of *swaraj* this problem lay dormant. Only they were used for political struggles. But their problem, their industry, their mainstay was not discussed, not developed, and they were not trained to think in those terms. So he would have realized these two basic deficiencies and he would have reframed the programme. Of course, he said, as a last will, 'Dissolve the Congress, turn it into a service organization.' So, as for the Congress, he had no use for it as a political body. He wanted it to be converted into *Lok Sevak*, that is the servant of the people. But in point of programmes, he would have reoriented the whole thing into the farmers' problems and programmes.

FJB: If Gandhiji was alive today and had the power to create whatever political order he wanted, what would he do?

JP: A political order. He would begin with the village republic and trust to it the functions of planning and developing the industries, social relationships and so on. He would not like the Planning Commission sitting at Delhi and taking abstracts of so many crores of rupees and distribution and so on.

First of all his main approach was man as a resource. Now here, man is a problem. Our present planners regard man as a problem, and how to employ him. Gandhiji had said, 'Man is the greatest resource; use that resource in your planning.' Second, 'Ask the man to exercise his brain. Why do you exercise your brain for him so his brain remains undeveloped?' So he would have changed the whole course of planning. He would have insisted on the villagers

exercising their good sense, their brain, their brotherliness, and becoming well.

He, first of all, insisted on village self-sufficiency. He would have developed area of self-sufficiency, so that the exchange would have been balanced. Now all raw materials go from villages to towns, and finished goods go from towns to villages. This is unequal exchange. He would have reversed all that and would have nothing to do with this one way traffic. That is why there is brain drain, there is no scope, and no opportunity today in the villages. He said that 'village society is the ideal which gives the best opportunity of personality development—economic, social, political, and religious, to its inhabitants'. Now it is not the present village.

FJB: It has been said that Gandhiji's attitude towards work meant a radical break with traditional attitudes?

JP: Work, he wanted, as I told you earlier. He did not divorce brain work from manual work.

FJB: He did not divorce, he wanted it together? But he gave a greater importance to physical work, is that right?

JP: This advice was for those who are mainly brain workers and want others to work for them. Everybody is a combined worker, brain and manual.

FJB: What you said before, that the development of the whole personal being, you know, you spoke about this. So, he was interested in the creative development?

JP: Yes.

FJB: In his life what was the significance of the *ashram*?

JP: Well, *ashram* trained volunteers. Gandhiji got his strength for both the constructive work and the political movement, the mainstay in *ashram*, from the constructive workers as well as the politicians. They were the reservoir of his strength.

FJB: What did Gandhiji mean by *swaraj*?

JP: *Swaraj*, again, is least government, not outside government.

FJB: And self?

JP: Republic, again.

FJB: Gandhiji believed in the freedom of all men, but he also was concerned with the freedom of the whole man. Could you comment on that?

JP: Freedom of whole man means the two aspects, the welfare of the man and the development of the man. He did not rest content with the welfare of the man, he wanted development of the man, so he would call freedom of the man if he has freedom to develop himself. The communists provide the welfare but not development of personality. Gandhiji said, 'I am not satisfied, man merely does not live by bread alone, he lives by something more and that something more, the communist state cannot supply.' So there is no freedom, he would call it freedom only if he is free to develop his personality.

FJB: I just have a few more questions. Could you tell me something about the Gandhian movement after Gandhiji's death?

JP: It became a routine movement in every sense of the term. The constructive activities were carried on physically, *khadi* done in a routine manner, done by registered institutions established during his time all with a closed attitude. There was no progressive rational attitude. The reason being that, I would say, he encouraged people to be silent workers and he emphasized more to devote to activities and he would not encourage intellectual pursuits. So his whole constructive work army was devoted but not brainy. Politicians were clever fellows, they didn't bother about this.

FJB: They didn't bother about it?

JP: No. I am making a very dangerous statement, but I have to make it.

FJB: How deeply do you feel Gandhiji penetrated into the consciousness of India?

JP: That was very original to him because he relied on the masses, on the strength of his trusting them. His leadership was established because of his trust in the masses, no leader before him trusted the masses so much. Even now the planners say that the masses can't plan, we are the experts and we can plan. But Gandhiji would not believe anything like that, either in planning or in managing their affairs or in developing their community. He would trust the indigenous person, the man in the village, and he would argue with him or see how he develops, but he would lay his main emphasis and burden on that. So that was the very essence of his leadership.

FJB: From what you say it didn't penetrate in the sense that after his death people could live in his spirit, is that true?

JP: The spirit was truncated. The spirit persists, but it does not grow, it has not strengthened.

FJB: And why was it truncated?

JP: I told you the movement drew people who were devoted but not brainy.

FJB: During his lifetime did Gandhiji comment on the difficulties of getting people to do constructive work?

JP: Yes, because, one, there was little attraction, press or publicity or leadership platform, and so on. Second, it was hard toil. One needs devotion, concentration and penance. It was not a sort of loose work but very demanding. Very concentrated effort was needed living mostly in the villages, that was very difficult. For other political work you live in towns and have facilities and opportunities and so many attractions. But constructive work was remaining in the village without any opportunities, cut off from the main currents, getting little remuneration, with great hardships in the family and so on. So naturally very few people could be attracted; especially very few brainy people could be attracted. It was partly because of this problem that not many gifted people could be attracted.

FJB: This you feel would have been necessary for the movement to grow?

JP: Yes. We had no resources to distribute.

FJB: What about the Bhoodan movement, could you comment on that?

JP: I had my differences from the very beginning. First, I said whatever land you get as gift you don't distribute, but collect for cooperative farming. Treat it as a village asset. But if you distribute land to the poor who are ignorant, non-initiative, resource-less and training-less, it will be spoilt, and will not be developed. So don't distribute, make it a cooperative unit. Second, develop it as a basic industry so that people get the science, get the technology, and they become brainy workers. Today most of the village people are just manual workers. So you develop the science of agriculture, the organization and the community through that asset. So I had put all these points before him. But Vinoba would not listen.

FJB: He didn't distribute?

JP: He distributed.

FJB: Not much?

JP: Whatever he got and could distribute he distributed. But if he had built up a community asset, developed it as a modern industry, developed the science of it, that would have been much better.

FJB: Could you comment then on Jayaprakash Narayan's movement in Bihar which spread then all over India?

JP: Jayaprakash Narayan is more of an agitator, than a constructive worker. I don't know whether he would like it but that's how I feel. I have worked with him for some years. And to the surprise of many people, he has again fallen back on the class consciousness aspect.

FJB: In which way?

JP: Oh, he talks about *sarvodaya*, in its aspect of converting people to do good has limits. It can yield no further results. So people should organize on class consciousness basis.

FJB: Oh, really?

JP: That was the great surprise, I wrote to him also.

FJB: When you look back on the last 30 years since Gandhiji died, how much of what he initiated has grown and developed?

JP: First of all, the Harijan movement has succeeded to a great extent. Now there is not much of a controversy except in certain pockets. The orthodoxy prevails, but public opinion does not support it. So that is a great success. Decentralization idea is catching up. People are getting disillusioned about centralization in economics, industry, and politics, because it goes on creating disparities, urban–rural disparities. Even within rural there are disparities, in urban there are disparities. It adds to the number of the unemployed. So centralization in economics and industry which had an attraction to the beginners, that is the people who took charge immediately are getting disillusioned and the idea of decentralization is catching up and that is why this idea of appropriate technology and intermediate technology. It is being taken up now. So decentralization, even if not practically seeing success, is getting more and more acceptance.

FJB: What about non-violence?

JP: Non-violence also, because they have seen the bitter struggles in China and Russia becoming imperialistic.

In America also, there is power politics. So people are more convinced today about the futility of wars and violence. Only the economic side is weak but the ideological side is brighter.

FJB: But what about the inner side, the real inner sense, the inner attitudes of truth and non-violence?

JP: Well, that is not getting attention today.

FJB: Two last questions. What would be different in present-day Indian society if Gandhiji had not lived? Maybe you have answered it in what you have just said?

JP: Then decentralization would not have been the prime idea. There were great movements of communism in India, such as in Hyderabad, Andhra, Bengal, the South, the West, and the East. These pockets were full of communism, particularly in Bengal. So there was bound to be anarchy and we can't foretell what would have happened. But this orderly progress towards village development and decentralization would not have taken place.

FJB: My last question is what is your message to the world?

JP: If they work more for synthesis in different fields of life it would be helpful to humanity's progress. Synthesis in economics, that is. There are various philosophies of economics but keeping the salient features, the personality development, in mind, work out a synthesis in economic philosophy, technology, sociology, politics and the world federations. They also should really, not strategically but really, work out synthesis.

FJB: This is really your emphasis? I was struck by it this morning and this is what you would sum it up with?

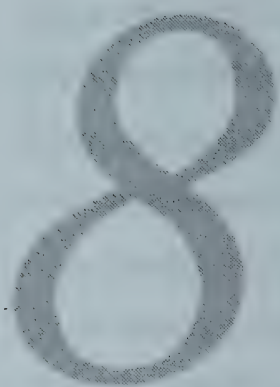
JP: I have worked in the UNO for five years. I was disillusioned.

FJB: You were disillusioned? But you feel it is important?

JP: Very important.

FJB: Why were you disillusioned?

JP: People, first of all. The recruitment was political. Second, there was no leadership and it was all highly paid staff and missions, useless missions, and so on. So there was really no idealism, but more of opportunism.



Sucheta Kripalani

SUCHETA KRIPALANI (*nee* Mazumdar) (1908–1974) was a freedom fighter, the first woman Chief Minister in India and an important political figure in the post-Independence India, who never wavered from Gandhian principles.

She was educated at Government College for Women, Lahore; and St. Stephen's College, Delhi; and taught History at the Benares Hindu University. Untimely death of her father had thrown on her the responsibility of looking after the family that she fulfilled with care and affection. Her marriage to J.B. Kripalani in 1936 challenged the established social norms. The decision of their marriage gave rise to strong opposition from their families. Gandhi himself was opposed to the marriage. Gandhi tried to persuade Sucheta to give up the idea as he feared he would lose his right arm, J.B. Kripalani, to married life. Sucheta countered it by saying that this marriage would give him two dedicated workers instead of one. But this did not have any effect. Gandhi continued to pursue his argument and almost convinced her of giving up the idea of marriage and to sever all contacts with Kripalani. However, when he

advised Sucheta to marry someone else, she told him that it would be unjust and immoral. Finally, Gandhi gave in and told her that he had no objection to her marriage but he would not be able to give his blessings, he would only pray for them. After a long waiting period, Sucheta and Kripalani finally married in April 1936. It remained a life-long bond, where both the partners had voluntarily decided to live like true companions. It was undoubtedly an off-beat union and in Kripalani's words 'one of the happiest'. Afterwards Gandhi came to know her better, and she associated closely with him in his work.

After her marriage, she became involved with the activities of the Indian National Congress. Her leadership qualities came to the forefront as she threw herself in the nationalist movement. Her meticulousness, her sanguine nature, her untiring ability to work, her efficient handling of difficult situations, and her selfless service to the nation endeared herself to the people. When she plunged into the Quit India Movement of 1942, she came to limelight like her contemporary Aruna Asaf Ali. Her support to the underground Congress Radio in Mumbai, disseminating news of the freedom struggle, enthused its operators including Usha Mehta. She also held important positions in the Indian National Congress, such as Secretary of the Women's Section, Member of the Working Committee and later as the General Secretary. Inspired by Gandhi she joined the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust as Organizing Secretary, and was closely involved in the work of the Gandhi National Memorial Trust.

It was Sucheta who had the privilege of singing the national songs *Vande Mataram*, *Jana Gana Mana* and *Saare*

Jahan Se Acchha in her melodious voice during the special session of the Constituent Assembly held in the night of 14 August 1947. Independence of the nation, won by selfless service and voluntary sacrifice of the people, however, came with a heavy price. Bloodshed and violence due to Partition of the country were overwhelming. In Noakhali, she was with Gandhi, who was deeply distressed and concerned for the devastated people. Her work with the people of the riot stricken areas displayed her courage and capacity. She worked tirelessly with the destitute refugees, and soothed their wounds. It was an ordeal that she voluntarily braved at the dawn of independence.

Sucheta was one of the few women elected to the Constituent Assembly. After Independence she was elected to the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament) in 1952, 1957 and 1967. She played an important role in the politics of Uttar Pradesh. She was a member of its Legislative Assembly from 1948 to 1950, and Minister of Labour, Community Development and Industry from December 1960 to October 1963. She was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh from October 1963 to March 1967. When Sucheta and Kripalani both were members of the Lok Sabha, for the first few years they did not draw the full amount of daily allowance of rupees forty five, but took rupees fifteen less per day. (In those days members of Parliament did not receive salary in addition to their daily allowance for the days they attended the session.) Sucheta had joined Praja Socialist Party in 1952, but rejoined Congress in 1956. As they belonged to separate political parties having different political views and voting differently, they often became targets of criticism from their political opponents. She was

a member of the Indian delegation to the UN in 1949. She led the Parliamentary Delegation to Turkey in 1954 and the Indian delegation to the International Labour Organization in 1961.

Sucheta was an able administrator, an effective parliamentarian and a patron of fine arts, and cottage and village industries. Her sensitivity to the poor and needy, tenderness to human suffering, concern for the visiting guests, hard work on duty and high standard of behaviour as an elected member were admirable. She looked after Kripalani with great affection. In Kripalani's words, 'She combined in herself the old virtues of Indian wife and the new virtue of working for the freedom of the nation and the service of its starving millions'. She remained deeply involved with social and political work all her life. Strenuous public activities, going to jail before Independence, taking part in political agitations and demonstrations, fighting her own elections and those of party members and managing many organizations took their toll on her health. She retired from active politics in 1971 and passed away in 1974.

In conversation (21 and 22 December 1973)



FRED J. BLUM (FJB): I would like to know about the significance of Gandhi for the Western world today.

SUCHETA KRIPALANI (SK): Western world today?

FJB: Well, anything about Gandhi is important. Your personal experiences are most important.

SK: Those I can tell you more easily. I don't know how to start. I worked very closely with Gandhiji. When he went

to work in the riot-affected Noakhali in East Bengal I and my husband had already gone there. We were the first to visit that place, and then we were instrumental in rescuing a girl. As a result, the people of that place wouldn't let me come back. We had gone just for a short visit. But I stayed on and my husband came. And in fact, from this area, I was the first person to go about, and to send genuine reports to Gandhiji. And after a month he came and joined us.

FJB: You were there first?

SK: I was there earlier, about three weeks before. My husband and I were the first to go and give a report as to what had happened because nobody would go there. The rioters were so violent that they wouldn't allow any outsider to come; even press reporters couldn't go there. We were the first to penetrate and then my husband came back to give the report. I stayed on. Now, on my own, what I was doing there all the time was to bring out the Hindu families who were marooned in villages with mostly Muslim population, and put them together in one camp. There was one rich man who converted his whole house into a camp. We were about 6,000 people there. And every day in the morning with the help of a few volunteers, I used to go out and fetch the families. We had really no contact with the Muslims; we were only bringing out the Hindus. When Gandhiji came here, he asked us what we had been doing. I said that we had been bringing out the Hindu families who were endangered. He said I had done wrong.

I said, 'How?'

He said, 'You are turning them into cowards. They have to stay there, and you have to change the atmosphere there.'

Why are you collecting them all in one camp? I would rather that you, and the workers with you, go to each affected village, stay there and change the atmosphere, change the hearts of the people.'

We really didn't know. He didn't tell us what we have to do, but he said, 'You go and do that'.

So I said, 'But I have just got a few boys and girls working with me, and they may be in danger.'

He said, 'Doesn't matter. If anything happens, first lay down your lives, and then the others will suffer.'

So we went into the villages. We split up. We sent in twos and threes, girls and boys, some grown-up, some young people. And then we found the method on our own, because of the challenge that Gandhiji had thrown at us.

We realized that we must work with the Muslims. Unless we win over their confidence, we wouldn't be able to make it safe for the Hindus either. So we started going to the Muslims, and we heard a very strange story. A few Muslims, the leaders, the Maulvis, the religious preachers, and so on had instigated the people to start the riots. But the ordinary persons there who had certainly participated in the looting and rioting were, at the moment, starving because they had disrupted the entire economy, they had disrupted the entire social structure of those areas. Nothing was working, markets had been burnt, hospitals had been broken, schools had been demolished; the whole life was at a standstill, because nothing was working. In that place, the landlords were mainly Hindus and the peasants were Muslims. It was not in absolute terms, but more or less. And when the Hindus had been destroyed there was nobody to pay the peasants, there was nobody to help them

to work. So the entire economic structure was gone. As a result, the Muslim families were also starving. When we started visiting them, we found that they were starving, except a few who had grown rich from looting, and their entire place was in a mess. Then we started working among the Muslims. We used to go and tell them, explain to them how they had suffered, and said, 'Now you meet together, form a committee, write letters to your neighbours who have run away, tell them that you will give them protection.'

In this way we started bringing peace into that area, and little by little some kind of goodwill also started prevailing. If the Partition hadn't happened, soon after, or a couple of years perhaps, some peace might have come there, and they might have lived peacefully. So Gandhiji taught us this one lesson—that it was not enough just to bring out the people. It is cowardly for them to leave their own hearth and home. You have to stay there and create an atmosphere of harmony and peace. That was one lesson I learnt from him.

Then there are so many things while working. He was a practical man. While working you learn things from him. Then we were distributing relief, giving food, clothes and other things to the people. One day he said, 'No you mustn't give anybody anything free of cost. You must make them work for what they get.'

I was flabbergasted. I said, 'How am I to give them work? Everything is disrupted here, and the people are suffering, they are starving. How am I to give them work, and then give them something?'

Then he told one thing which I even today remember. He said, 'Sucheta, they have lost everything, these people.'

Don't take away their self-respect, don't make them into beggars.'

I started arguing with him. I said, 'Suppose a woman comes to me in the morning with her child in her arms, and asks me to give her food, shall I not give her food? Or shall I first try to find out work for her?'

He said, 'Put a stone on your chest. Put a stone on your heart. Don't give her food. Give her some work. Maybe any work, so that she gets her food in return for work.'

After he said that, we started thinking what work we can give to the people. So we started clearing the ponds which had been destroyed. All sorts of things had been dumped into it. And then we started making pathways. Agriculture had come to a standstill, because, as I told you, the Muslim peasants were the agriculturists and the Hindus were mainly owners. So we formed volunteer corps to go and work on the fields. We did various such little activities. We started opening little dispensaries, starting little schools. Some activity we started by which we could give the people help in return of work.

While working with Gandhiji in other spheres also I learnt one thing: that it is not just enough to help people by giving them things from above. It is, in a way, a bad thing for them. What we should try to do is to generate strength in the people to help themselves. I was the Secretary of the Kasturba Memorial Trust (established after his wife died). He was the Chairman of the Trust. And he used to look into every little detail, and no work was too small for him not to attend to. In the midst of all his various important political activities, he was very careful to see that everything was laid out as he wanted. In working out the

scheme for Kasturba Trust, first of all, he said that we must work in the villages. Why in the villages?

‘Because’, he said, ‘this is a memorial to my wife’. And he said, ‘My wife was an uneducated village woman. She was not like these sophisticated women of the cities. So in her memory you should go and serve people like her.’

So he laid down that not only should we go and work among the women in the villages, but we should go into the remotest, most interior villages, least affected by city influence, or least served by the cities. So we had a programme of giving the women general education, teaching them crafts, teaching them to be nurses and midwives, or teachers. We started three kinds of activities—teaching to be teachers, craft workers, and midwives.

There, in order to make these institutions we started a lot of small centres in the villages. We had training centres in different states, and small centres in the villages. He said:

For the first year the Trust will pay all the expenses. But from the second year you try to raise funds from your activities locally, part of it, one-fifth, and like that. In five years I want these institutions to become self-supporting.

It was very difficult for us. We failed really in that. But had he lived, perhaps we might have succeeded, because he was very strict in these matters. But he said:

The idea is that we cannot spend all eternity on these institutions, and if you want these institutions to grow, if you want the women in the villages as well as the village people to build up for themselves, then the initiative must come from them. Some kind of help either in terms of work or in terms of money must come from them.

So he was inculcating in them the spirit of self-service, and he wanted us to be the catalytic agency for that. Well, we did try to do it, but on the whole we failed because we are too busy building up the institution and we neglected the money collection part of it. But in the earlier years we did more of that, when Gandhiji was himself supervising our work.

FJB: Yes, but what do you mean when you say you failed? Do you mean in the fund raising?

SK: We failed in local fund raising.

FJB: But the institutions went on?

SK: Yes, they are even now going on.

FJB: What kind of institutions are they?

SK: Each state has a training centre. We started Kasturba Trust in 1945–46 after Gandhiji returned from jail. Kasturba died in prison, you know. At that time women were not as advanced as you find women of India today. There were a section of educated women, but largely there were not so many able women in different states. He said:

This is the institution for women, I want women themselves to look after it. Go and find in each state one lady who can take charge of the institution, and as far as possible, she will find women workers. You may, once in a while, get the help of a man to the least extent, but try to see that women organize it for themselves.

I was the organizing Secretary for the whole of India. In some of the states like Madras (now Tamil Nadu) and

Bengal, and other places where women's education was already advanced, it was easy, it wasn't difficult. But in some states like Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where women's education had hardly begun, it was very difficult for me. But then he wouldn't allow us to have a man there. He said, 'No, somehow or the other, you will find somebody. Even if she hasn't got enough education, you generate in her self-confidence, help her in every possible way, see that you develop.' When he put that hard test on us, we did go and find women. Some of them were not very good, but somehow or the other we were able to bring out the latent strength in that lady, latent capacity, with the help of others. So this was a great booster, great thing of self-confidence for the women. In the same way he wanted to generate self-confidence in the villagers also, that they should do their own development.

You wanted to know what sort of organization it was. We had, as I said, in each state a training centre. Now, the woman in charge had to go and select girls from the villages and bring them to the training centre, give them some general training first for a few months, and see for which work they had greater aptitude. We had three types of training—as midwife, as craft teacher and as ordinary teacher. We started a large number of nursery schools all over the villages. We used to train girls as nursery school teachers. They were trained for a year or so. After training we used to take those girls out to the villages, select places where they were established. In establishing them we had first to create a consensus of opinion in the village, because some of the villagers are so backward that they wouldn't

care to have a woman working there, or they would think that she can be exploited.

FJB: Because she is a woman?

SK: Yes, she is a woman. She is by herself, without any protection. She can be exploited by anybody. So when we went to the village, first we used to have public meetings. Call the leaders of the village, talk to them, tell them to sponsor her case themselves. So somebody would give us a house where we could open the school, or the dispensary, or whatever it was. Then we will put them, we will say, 'You are responsible for the girl, you will have to see and look after her.' We involved them in her work. In this way it was quite a hard task.

I remember that we would sit in a car and go for days together from village to village, spending the night there and talking to the people. Sometimes we stayed in a village for more than two or three days to bring about proper atmosphere, and then constantly we had to go and visit. So these girls were there, their work was not merely to run the little institutions, they had to go and meet the families, talk to them, be involved in all their general, social and other matters; so that these girls were a kind of light to the village. Our ambition was very great. I can't say we succeeded in all that, but in some cases we succeeded. They had to see to the sanitation, they had to see to the non-exploitation of women and children. To all these things they had to attend, and that they could only do with the help of the leaders of the village. So the whole idea of Gandhiji was, that the people should lift themselves.

FJB: Now, you said you failed in the fund raising. What was the reason for it?

SK: One was our own fault. That when you are in a hurry you want to do things fast. It is easier for us to raise funds from the city and go and do it. It is more difficult to raise funds from the poor localities.

FJB: Is it at all possible? Do these people have any money?

SK: In the sense that they can give labour. Some can give funds. For instance, if the cultivators can't give money they can give grain. They can work. Let us suppose we are putting up a structure, they can work for it. They can build a road; they can do so many other things. Some of the villagers are rich enough; they can pay some cash also. But cash is not always necessary, you can get other things, in kind they could have always helped, but it was more laborious for us to do that work. It was easier for us to collect 100 rupees from some friends in the city, than to raise 5 rupees worth of grain from each person. So that is why I said the fault was ours, not theirs.

FJB: And these training centres are in operation now?

SK: Yes, some of them are. I will tell you what happened ultimately. Later on the Kasturba Trust took up the work of training the workers for the community development that the Government started for their project, and they started getting some pensions from the Government for this training purpose. Gradually now their work has been reduced, but their main all India centre is at Indore. If you like you can visit it. There is a big centre.

FJB: I would like to go back to a few questions.

SK: Yes, please do.

FJB: When you spoke about going to Noakhali, you said that it was very difficult to get in, even press reporters couldn't get in. How did you get in?

SK: Well, it was a big adventure. You see, my husband, that very year, had been elected as the President of the Congress. He was the President-elect, he had not yet taken charge. Gandhiji was very worried, we were all worried. We were hearing all kinds of rumours, but no correct report. The Muslim League government was conniving with those rioters, and some brave people tried to go, they came back injured. Nobody could enter because they had cut the roads. After the rains, the roads were anyhow flooded. They were just all over. The Hindu population was very small there. Gandhiji was in Delhi at that time. I used to be very busy with Kasturba Trust work in those days. One day I came home and I learnt that my husband was going to Noakhali. Gandhiji had asked him to go because he was not getting any report. So then I said, I too want to go, because I was afraid. We were hearing such wild rumours that I thought he might go there and get killed. So I said, 'Let us go together.' I didn't want him to go alone. So I went to Gandhiji and said, 'I too want to go'. First he said, 'No, you can't go.' Then he thought about it. He said, 'Alright you can go, you are a Bengali so you can translate. Work as a translator, go along with him.'

So we flew to Calcutta. Sarat Chandra Bose, Subhash Chandra Bose's elder brother, was the leader there. He was to accompany us. He had asked one of his workers to try

to get some news by the time we reached Calcutta. But we found that he hadn't succeeded in getting any news. He had sent some workers down but they had not returned. Trains were also not moving. From there, things were in a very difficult state. We took a small flying club plane, and flew to one of the derelict army airstrips in Comilla. Comilla is another big town there. Sarat Bose, myself and Kripalaniji got down at Comilla. In Comilla the whole place was converted like a refugee camp. Every school, every big building, was full of refugees who had run from Noakhali. In Comilla there was not actual rioting, but there was a lot of tension. So we spent the day meeting and talking to the refugees. Then Sarat Bose and Kripalaniji decided that they would like to have a talk with the Governor.

The Governor and the Chief Minister were both at Chittagong. So we flew to Chittagong. We talked to them. We found that the Governor was totally unsympathetic, a Britisher. Suhrawardy was the Chief Minister, and he also took things very lightly. The Governor said, 'Oh, there is peace and calm, there is no trouble any more.' And he talked in such a fashion that we got very annoyed. So we decided to return. We thought nothing could be done. While we were returning Suhrawardy said he wanted a lift in our plane, so we brought him along. As we were flying over Noakhali we could see spirals of smoke, and houses were still burning. When we showed it to him, he said, 'Oh that's nothing, nothing'. He just didn't bother, so we returned to Calcutta.

After we returned to Calcutta Sarat Bose thought we had done our work. Then I and my husband, we discussed together. I said 'What will we tell Gandhiji? What have we

seen? We have seen only a few refugees in the camps, in these concentrations. We have not actually visited the riot affected areas.' So my husband said, 'I want to go out again and try to find out where we can land, and how we can go in.' Then Sarat Bose didn't want to accompany us.

We got hold of one or two other people who could accompany us, and again took out the plane and reached a place called Feni, another little derelict airstrip, war airstrip. From there we could see roads had been cut and rivers were full. Boats had been mainly destroyed by the Muslims. Or if boats were there, there were no boatmen. Bullocks had been killed; the bullock carts were also not there, so we started walking. We walked, and in one or two places we did manage to cross the rivers with the help of some boat, and reached a place called Haimchar. We reached there late in the evening. The whole place was burnt out and there were a few Hindus there, but they were hiding and in great fear. It was a great scene of terror. And when we came they came out, and told us all the things that had happened to them.

From Haimchar we walked, and wherever we could, we got hold of a bullock cart. We reached a place called Chuomuhani. And Chuomuhani was in Noakhali district, that was a railway station. In some areas trains were running. Chuomuhani was 16 miles from the affected village. We stayed in Chuomuhani with a grain merchant, a well-to-do man of that place. All the people came round and told us what had happened. From Chuomuhani we walked 16 miles to the affected village. By that time there was no actual rioting. After the riots there was a little lull. Before leaving Calcutta we had also informed the

police, informed the Government, that they should try to do something. As we were going, they were a little afraid of public opinion by that time. So after we reached, within two days a small army unit came there. But the first time we walked along with local people from the city and reached the riot affected place. The first village was where I told you we had a big camp at a *zamindar's* house. A lot of people had come and taken shelter in his house. It was a big, strong, solid stone house, and later on I carried on my activity from that place.

FJB: You said that most of the landowners were Hindus, and the people who were cultivating the fields were Muslims. Was that a factor in the riots?

SK: Well, it may have been a little. But at the same time you must realize that for centuries this arrangement had been there, and the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims had been very good. Many Hindu men, they were better educated naturally, used to go out and work in Calcutta, leaving their families in charge of these Muslims. They used to look after and protect them. Though they had two different religions, though they never ate together, though there was no inter marriage, yet the relationship was so good that the children of a Hindu would call the Muslim neighbour uncle and aunt, and there was a relation of affection and trust. But after the Muslim League Ministry came they were sedulously fostering anti-Hindu feelings, with the idea of bringing about this breach. So the religious leaders of the Muslims, the Maulvis, and political leaders—there was an MLA called Sarwarkhan or someone, I now forget the name—deliberately fostered enmity

and frightened the Hindus. This was going on for a long time. Sarwarkhan had organized a volunteer corps, a very aggressive volunteer corps and they deliberately prepared for it. One day, all of a sudden, they attacked the Hindus. So there may be a small element of economic class which was dormant. It was dormant but the real trouble was religious, and communal, not economic, not in that place.

FJB: You spoke about Gandhi as a practical man. Can you say a little bit more what you mean by that?

SK: What I feel is that Gandhi knew India better than most people, the real India, India of the poor, and the villagers. Whatever solution he gave was such that it was workable. For instance, take basic education. The two elements in basic education were that it should be activity-based, and the educated man afterwards should be able to find a place for himself in the society. He should not get alienated because of his education. What is the trouble in India? All the village boys who are educated do get alienated.

FJB: You mean now?

SK: No. All along it has been so, all along. The kind of education that we have had in this country was, as you know, started by Macaulay in the early nineteenth century with the idea that they should get some English-educated men to help them run the administration. Though the British have gone, our education system has more or less remained the same. The result is, as soon as the boy becomes matriculate, completes his school education, he looks forward to a white collar job. He doesn't want to carry on his family or traditional activity. So we have got this huge number

of educated unemployed in this country. Perhaps this is a country where we have the largest number of educated unemployed, and the consequence of that was that the villages get denuded of all the intelligent people. Villages get denuded of all the bright boys.

Gandhiji said we must keep these people in villages. The villages get poorer and poorer, all the old traditions and crafts have died out, and they have not been replaced by anything. The biggest problem in India is that the land is overburdened with people who cannot work there. More and more people have turned to agriculture, and agriculture can't hold them. So this surplus population from the land had to be absorbed in something else. So he said there must be village industry. There must be other types of village activity which can absorb these boys. A little surplus can come elsewhere, but they must be absorbed there. And in order to absorb them there, we must give them an education which will give them a mentality as well as ability, to stay in the village. That is the way he worked out this basic education, education based on activity, which trained and made them better workers. And if the boy went back to his traditional work, he would improve that work, instead of being a burden on the society. That was one aspect of it. And the second aspect was that we are a poor country, we can't afford to run all these schools, and the Government hasn't got enough money, even if they want to. So he said that the activity which the boys learn, that activity should be purposeful, there should be some little economic benefit out of that work, maybe a little.

The bureaucrats, however, turned down the whole education system, the whole of Gandhiji's theory, by saying,

'You are exploiting children'. Gandhiji never said that all the expenses of the school should be borne out by the children's work, but he said part of it, maybe one-tenth of it, maybe one-fifteenth of it, can come out of the work of the children. For instance, in the earlier stage of the experiment of basic education, it was very thrilling to watch it. We used to go into Wardha and sit and watch the work. When they worked in the garden, grew vegetables and other things, they valued it. It came to the kitchen and that was the children's contribution. In the same way they did some carpentry, they made furniture for the schools, that was their contribution. Also spinning. Spinning was one of the crafts. The children spun thick yarn. I remember, out of that yarn some cloth was woven, and the little children got their little trousers or little shirts out of that. That was their contribution towards the education. Even that little he was wanting, so that gradually as the boys came to the higher class, their work will yield a greater amount of money. You see, it was a very practical system, very suited to this country, a poor country.

FJB: Yes, I see what you mean. I have another question. You started off speaking about Noakhali and said that was where you met Gandhi.

SK: No, not that I have met him there. I said I worked closely with him there.

FJB: You have been the Secretary of Kasturba Memorial Trust. But she died several years before.

SK: Yes, two years. I have known Gandhiji even before my marriage. I came to know Gandhiji well from 1931–32.

FJB: Can you talk about your impressions when you first met him? When, how and where?

SK: Sitting in an audience I had, of course, seen him as a leader and a public speaker, many years earlier than that. But I first came to know him really when he went to work in Bihar after the earthquake. I was then teaching in the Benares Hindu University. So I took leave and went to work there. And that was when I first saw him, at close quarters, and talked to him. When you see Gandhiji for the first time, there is so much reverence and awe for him from a distance, before you know him well. So I kept myself at a little distance watching him naturally, as to what he was doing. He struck me as a man of immense compassion, at the same time, of great discipline, even in his compassion he wouldn't allow discipline to go.

I have seen him working with people. For instance, I shall tell you a very interesting experience. In Bihar, several ladies went with Bapu. Each one wanted to serve him. They were very eager to do personal service rather than other things. But Gandhiji wanted each to work according to his or her capacity. He had asked Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade), to write some things and do other things, and not do personal services for him. And for his personal service there was Jayaprakash's wife, Prabha. There were other girls also, who were not educated, who could do other things for him, such as fetching his food, cooking his things, and so on.

Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade), due to her love for him, wanted to do these little things, these little services. I remember he was just getting ready to go somewhere in the car (he was touring all the time). Bapu was eating, he had a little bowl which he carried along wherever he went,

and she was again and again coming and asking, 'Bapu have you finished?' She wanted to wash the bowl. Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade) had to accompany Bapu, and she didn't want others to wash the bowl. So she was in a hurry. So Bapu gave her a good scolding. He said, 'What for do you want to do these things? I have given you something else to do, why do you want to do this?' So though he loved these people, if the work didn't go well he was there ready to scold them. I have seen Rajkumari Amrit Kaur rendered to tears by some little mistake she had done in recording something.

FJB: Who was that?

SK: Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, that was later on. Later on I have seen her taking anybody to task. I never got a scolding from him. I must also tell you that he was a very good teacher. I joined Bapu, I came to work with him after I had been a professor in a university for a number of years. I was a mature person, not a youngster, and I fancied that I wrote fairly well. When I was doing Kasturba Trust work, every time I worked with him, every time I returned, I had to submit a report. He would go through each and every line of that report to see whether I had used one word extra, and whether the draft was fully balanced. His economy of words was such. 'Why have you added this extra adjective? There is no need, cross it out.'

My language is Bengali. He was very keen that I should learn Hindi and that I should submit the reports in Hindi. He was also very keen that we should all know the language. I couldn't write Hindi, I could speak, of course, faulty Hindi. Even now I speak ungrammatical Hindi. So just to please him, I would sit with somebody and try

to write the whole report in Hindi. At that age I was not anxious to learn another language. But I would do that just to please him. I even started learning a little Urdu in jail. I read three or four books with the help of a companion, and also wrote a short letter to Bapu in Urdu, just to please him.

In this way, out of his love, he taught, made us to do things out of love for him. But he put hard conditions on us so that we learnt it. Otherwise we wouldn't have cared. And in any work that we did, even menial work, he was very particular that it must be done perfectly. When sometimes I stayed in the *ashram* he would make us even to clean the latrine and carry the buckets of night soil to dump somewhere else, and such things which we had never done before, but he would make us do it.

FJB: Everybody?

SK: Everybody by turns. All of us had to do it, because these bad things nobody would like to do. And he would see that the bathroom was properly clean, not a speck of dust was there, everything was perfect. Beginning with writing, to this smallest work, he saw that each one did it absolutely to the best of his or her ability. So that is why I say that he was a very good teacher. No other leader, no other eminent leader, has been a teacher to that extent.

FJB: You spoke about his compassion, that he had a great deal of compassion and also the discipline. Also that he wouldn't allow the compassion to interfere with the discipline, so to speak. Can you say a little bit more?

SK: I have told you about that compassion; that he had come to Noakhali because of his compassion, because he felt for those people so strongly. But at the same time he told me that you cannot run away with your feelings of kindness. Give to that woman if she came starving, but you must first get something out of her so that she doesn't feel that she is begging and getting things free. That is an extreme example of that.

Then I have seen, as I told you, scolding the topmost people very harshly, rendering them to tears. Of course, he didn't have to scold very harshly in the sense that if he said one word we all felt it was harsh. But I will give you an instance of his compassion. In Wardha at Sevagram, in the early days when I had gone there, I would see early in the morning, after the prayers, before doing any work he would visit all the little houses in the *ashram* and meet people, particularly those people who were ill. The sick people were his charge. And then he would go and advise, he had his own naturopathy and all kinds of fads, he would say, 'do this' 'do that', and so on. There was an elderly woman, a Gujarati widow. She had injured her foot. The foot had to be dressed. Anybody else could have done it, but Bapu would go himself every morning and dress her foot.

FJB: In Sevagram?

SK: In Sevagram. Every morning he would go and dress that lady's foot. And the tenderness with which he would do it, had to be seen to be experienced. She was just a nobody, just a widow, just an ordinary admirer of Bapu. She was not even much of a worker. But if anybody was ailing or suffering, or if anyone had any trouble, Bapu was ready

to listen to it. He was never too busy to listen to anybody's suffering. In fact he liked people to come and tell him.

The trouble with me was that I was his worker. In my personal life I did not bother him very much. I was already married and we were very much in love with each other. So we didn't need anybody else. So I never used to confide in him my difficulties or anything. In fact I am a rather independent-minded person. Even in my work I will manage things myself. In fact one day he complained that 'You don't tell me things.'

FJB: What did you do then?

SK: That arose out of another work. After the Partition when the refugees were coming, I did a lot of work. In fact, I was the main person who organized the refugees, before the Government was ready to look after them here. I organized a Relief Committee with Rajendra Babu as the Chairman. But he did nothing. I organized the whole thing, and I was looking after thousands of refugees in Delhi. Later on we expanded into other parts. After two months of my running the camps I had about more than 30,000 people under my charge.

The Delhi administration was by that time geared up, and they were ready to take over the camp. So I said, 'All right, go ahead, take over the camp, it will be a relief for me.' But then I went and told Gandhiji, (he was staying in Birla house) 'Yesterday I have handed over the charge'. He was very annoyed with me. He said, 'You never consulted me, you never talked to me, why did you hand over the charge because they are not ready and they won't do the things properly, you will see.' And, as it happened, he

was correct. I had to go on helping them for quite another month before they were ready to take over. So he said, 'Oh, you go on doing things without consulting anyone.'

FJB: I ask another question. If I rightly remember, you have referred to the earthquake in Bihar. If I recall correctly, at that time Gandhi said that this earthquake was due to human failing and God's wrath and Tagore, if I am right, recites a poem. Can you tell me about that?

SK: Well, what can I say? I can only say that I don't agree with Gandhiji.

FJB: Yes, but what made him say it? Can you say a little bit more what it was? Did you talk to him about it?

SK: No, I never talked to him. I didn't know him at that time so well. I only heard it and marveled at it, and I didn't accept it. But why he said it? In a general way, maybe, that suffering, human suffering, comes as retribution. But then at least my brain doesn't accept it. Retribution may be to certain individuals who have done wrong, why these thousands of innocent people should suffer? I don't understand it.

FJB: I see. Now could you follow a little bit more, you first really met Gandhiji in 1931, could we follow a little bit what you did from 1931 on?

SK: Yes. I was at Benares, teaching.

FJB: What was your field of teaching?

SK: I was teaching history, then in Benares.

Jamnalal Bajaj was the treasurer of the Congress. He was a capitalist, but a follower of Gandhiji. And during my stay

there, Jamnalal Bajaj took a lot of interest in me, and he was running some institution. Gandhiji went to Wardha at Jamnalal Bajaj's invitation, because Jamnalal was Wardha based, that was his home.

FJB: So that's how he started the *ashram* in Sevagram?

SK: Yes. Jamnalal was a very close associate of Gandhiji. Among the rich people, I mean, mill owners, he was his number one follower. So Jamnalal had started many institutions in Wardha and there was a women's school, Mahila Ashram. He was very keen that I should leave the university and go there, after he came to know me in Bihar. I was not anxious to go. I liked college teaching better than the school work. But he was pressing me very much. So I said, 'All right, I will go and see.' So I went to Wardha along with him. Finally I decided not to leave my job. But from then on my contact with Gandhiji and others became rather close.

I used to visit Wardha, off and on, to meet him. Then my intimate talk with Gandhiji came when we [J.B. Kripalani and Sucheta] decided to marry. We were in love with each other and we were anxious to marry. But my husband at that time was very friendly with Jawaharlal Nehru. They were like brothers, they were very close. Later on because of political difference they fell apart, but he was in jail when we wanted to marry. So he said, 'Let my brother Nehru come out of jail, then we will marry.' So at last he came out of jail. He was in prison for three years. So when he came out, other troubles arose.

Gandhiji was very much opposed to our marriage. Gandhiji, on the whole, didn't like his workers to marry.

Kripalaniji was fairly of an advanced age compared to Indian standards, so his family also was not happy at the idea. He had only one sister living. She was also a political worker in Karachi. She wrote to Gandhiji, 'Look at my brother, he has led an austere life, and now at this age he wants to marry'. So these two things complicated our life.

Then Gandhiji sent for me, he wanted to talk to me. It was very embarrassing for me to go and talk this personal matter with him. I was feeling very nervous, still I went to Wardha to talk to him about this. That was also a very unique experience, such a personal matter. I knew Gandhiji, but not that well. But when I talked to him his whole approach was so human and even modern, I would say, that I didn't feel any embarrassment when I discussed with him. And his argument was that he doesn't want Kripalani to marry because he is one of his very important workers. He said, 'If you marry him you will break my right arm.'

I said, 'Why do you think like that? Why don't you think that instead of one worker you will get two? I can also work and I do want to work.'

So he said, 'No, no. I have seen it all. My people, once they get married, get involved in their families, their mind is diverted from the struggles. So I don't want you to marry.' So I came back after that.

This went on again and again, he would send for me and advise me not to marry, and so on. Ultimately I said, 'All right, I won't marry, I will not.'

So then he came out with something very funny. He said, 'If you don't marry and you remain unhappy then it will burden Kripalani. So that is not proper. You marry somebody else.'

I said, 'Why should I marry somebody else?' Then I also gave him a very different line of reply. I said, 'I think it is very immoral and dishonest to marry somebody else, when I love someone. I won't marry anybody else. If you don't want us to marry, all right, I will remain unmarried, but I won't marry.' I said, 'What will I give to that man whom I marry?' He had no reply to that. He kept quiet. Then afterwards, many months after that, he wrote to me, 'All right, go ahead, you marry. I can't bless you, but I will pray for you.' So we both said that's good enough for us. Thus I came to know Gandhiji really intimately during all these talks I had with him.

FJB: Yes I can imagine. You said he was very human, even modern. What do you mean by that?

SK: You see, I could talk to him anything. When we were discussing these things I didn't feel any great embarrassment. The manner he talked, the sympathy, the love that he showed, that made it possible for me to discuss even such an intimate matter as this. And human, of course he was very human, if anybody had any trouble, he could understand.

FJB: Why do you feel he eventually wrote to you and said it's alright go ahead and get married?

SK: I think he found that this was a burden on my husband also, that it did trouble him that we had been in love with each other for a number of years, and it did divert his mind more, perhaps. I mean, it was a kind of cross on him. So for that, because he didn't know me well enough, but he knew him well enough, and so he agreed. And I also took

up the challenge. I said, 'I assure you that there can be two workers and not one.' And I did it with my life. All my life I worked, and later on he changed his views.

FJB: The question of *brahmacharya* interests me quite a bit. From what you said, Gandhi's argument was in terms of availability – that your husband would not have been as much available for the national struggle as at present. But he also at times said that *brahmacharya* is necessary really to become the best possible *satyagrahi*. Can you say a little more about that?

SK: I personally feel, as far as we are concerned we have lived as companions all our lives. Because of Gandhiji's pressure, pressure not in the general sense, but because of our love and regard for him, because I had said that he would get two workers and not one, we have been living like two friends. But I think Gandhiji overdid it. Perhaps he was more obsessed by it than necessary. I should not say it perhaps, but that is how I feel. That is what I feel, because sex is a very important part of life, but I don't think that it is so important that it cripples you if you are not able to indulge in it. You can find fulfillment in other ways also. It may not be for the average, but for people who are so much taken up with particular work, the struggle was something which meant everything for us. People who were absolutely inundated with those ideas, they could easily, I shouldn't use the word easily, but they could lead a life without sex, by sublimating sex.

FJB: How did they sublimate?

SK: By working in their work.

FJB: By throwing themselves into the national struggle?

SK: Yes, yes. In our life we have done it. So I don't feel it is that much necessary.

FJB: But do you see something positive in it?

SK: It is a theory that according to Indian standards, it gives you positive strength. *Brahmacharya* does give you positive strength. But I have no personal experience of that except that we have led our lives in that way without feeling anything.

FJB: But you didn't feel it was a positive strength, that you were able to do it because of your involvement?

SK: I feel that because of my involvement, and also due to various other factors. Both of us were in and out of jail. I said if I bring a family into this trouble, what will I give to the children? So mine was an experience. These factors were, more or less at a lower level, not at the highest sublimation level. I did it for practical reasons, for my commitment to Gandhiji and we were so busy that we had really no time.

FJB: Did he make it a condition?

SK: No, he didn't make it a condition, but I took it as a challenge. He said, 'It can't be done.'

And I said, 'It can be done.'

He said, 'You will get involved in family life if you marry.'

I said, 'No, we can be two workers', and I wanted to show him.

FJB: Now if I rightly understand you, at that time you decided not to give up your work at the university until you married, is that right?

SK: I had other family difficulties. My father had died, I was the oldest in the house and we were a large family, seven/eight children, and until somebody else started earning I couldn't leave my mother stranded. So I continued to work till 1939. I got married in 1936, I left University in 1939, by that time my brother and sister, two of them, were ready to look after the family. Mine was a purely personal consideration, I had to work.

FJB: So you really had to work. And in 1939 you left the University, and then?

SK: My husband was then the General Secretary, so I came to Allahabad at the Swaraj Bhavan and stayed with him. I left just before the vacation. So during the vacation I said, 'What am I to do? I can't sit idle.' So during the vacation I started working in the AICC office. There was nobody to run the foreign department. In those days, in the foreign department, we used to publish a bulletin, carry on correspondence with various sympathetic organizations abroad, and so on. So I took up that work. After a while Dr Lohia came and joined. He became the secretary of the foreign department, and I handed over that department to him. And then they thought of starting a women's department for the first time. Before that there was none, so I set about organizing that. I used to travel all over India.

FJB: These are all departments of the Congress?

SK: Yes, of Congress. It was in 1939 that I started to organize the women's department. Then the time came to go to jail. In 1940 I went to prison. I was in prison for more than a year.

FJB: But this was before the 'Quit India Movement'?

SK: Yes, 'Quit India Movement' came in 1942. So I was in prison. I came out of prison in January 1942, and then by the middle of that year, we were in the midst of it, in August the movement started.

FJB: Why did they put you in prison in 1940?

SK: Yes, 1940 was individual *satyagraha*. I was very keen to go to jail because everybody had gone to jail and I hadn't. So I thought it was really a matter of great shame. So I was one of the early ones, I think I was the eighth *satyagrahi* in India.

FJB: Eight individuals? And what did you do, did you also read?

SK: I didn't have a chance to read. I sent a letter to the magistrate. I selected a district from where I would offer *satyagraha*. It was Faizabad in UP. I had done a lot of work in that district, so I selected that district. I sent a notice to the magistrate, that on such and such a day, at such and such a place, I am going to offer *satyagraha*, and address a public meeting. So I and my husband both reached and stayed with a friend there. Early in the morning about 4 O'clock I heard police boots marching all round the house. I said the police had arrived. I was arrested and taken to the jail in the morning.

FJB: Was there a trial?

SK: Yes, there was a trial in the jail, and they gave me one year's imprisonment with some fine. In lieu of that, another two months. So I got 14 months' jail.

FJB: And what were you accused of?

SK: Under the Defence of India Act, we were speaking against the war, against the war efforts.

FJB: Was that the last time you were in jail?

SK: No, then in 1942 I was in prison. I had also gone to attend an AICC meeting, and then we returned at night on 9 August. We were staying with Sardar Patel as his guests. Early in the morning the police came and arrested Sardar and Kripalani and took them away.

FJB: In 1942?

SK: In 1942. That day all the leaders were arrested including Gandhiji. I wasn't arrested. There was a warrant issued for me in UP. For different categories of political workers they had different types of warrants. Some had all India warrants, some had a state warrant. Kripalaniji's warrant was an all India warrant because he was a big leader. So all of them were arrested and I wasn't arrested by the Bombay police. But a warrant was issued in Allahabad where I used to stay. Then we organized the underground movement. I was one of the organizers. So when Kripalaniji was going, I asked, 'What are we to do?' He said, 'You stay here, don't go back to Allahabad, and try to do whatever you can.' So then some of us got together that evening. There was a lot

of turmoil in Bombay that day. First of all we didn't know where these people were being taken. We thought that they will be taken to the jail in Bombay. Then we learnt that they were taking them out of Bombay. So we rushed to the station to see, but the whole station was cordoned off by the police and CID. So we couldn't go in. All we learnt was that the train had steamed out with these people. And then we were waiting. For about a fortnight we didn't know where these people were taken, except that Gandhiji was taken to Aga Khan Palace. After a fortnight we came to know that they were in Ahmednagar Fort. Meanwhile some of us friends got together and we decided to carry on the movement. Of course, people didn't wait for any instructions, everywhere there was an outburst. Then we set up an underground AICC office in Bombay, with some AICC staff who were already there.

FJB: Underground because it was forbidden?

SK: Yes, we could not function openly. And we raised funds. Wherever people were working we organized demonstrations, and went and worked with them. So I carried on underground. I was, in a way, the key person holding on to the office. Mrs Aruna Asaf Ali, Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan and others came and joined us after a month, and all of us issued various statements and so on. I didn't issue any statement in my name because I was holding the office. They didn't want me to get exposed. But we travelled all over the country under assumed names, and in whatever way we could embarrass the government, we did it.

FJB: In which way?

SK: All the sabotage activities that were going on—we didn't discourage them. We financed them and let them carry on.

FJB: What kind of sabotage?

SK: Breaking of railways, post offices, and so on, weaning away the people and government officers from working. All this went on and there was a lot of controversy about it, whether we were right or wrong.

FJB: What was Gandhi's position?

SK: Gandhiji was in jail. He didn't know what we were doing, but he did come to know after a while. In the beginning nobody bothered about anything. They just did what they wanted. A few of us confined ourselves to the underground. We went on encouraging these people to do whatever they were doing, and helping them in any possible way. We said, 'Right or wrong, let us get rid of the British government somehow or the other.' That was our impulsive attitude.

We forgot all about non-violence and every other thing, because we were a younger lot who worked together. And then, after a while, when the movement was a little subsided, all sorts of questions arose: is it right, or is it wrong, whether violence should have been there, whether non-violence should have been there, and so on. And some of the purists in Gandhiji's movement had come back. Some of them came out of jail soon. All the people had been picked up. Some of us, who had gone underground, hadn't been picked up. If I had come to Allahabad I would

have got arrested. But as I stayed in Bombay they didn't arrest me. We used to stay in Allahabad, in UP, where Jawaharlal's home is, because the Congress office was there and my husband was the General Secretary. He had been General Secretary for 12 years. He and I we were living there. So my warrant was issued there. I didn't come to Allahabad at all and started working in Bombay; changing houses, changing our office also from time to time. We ran an underground radio making announcements. We collected information of the atrocities that were committed all over the country. We sent money all over. We ourselves went from place to place to encourage people to do whatever they were doing. Then we tried to send out news outside India to acquaint people with the terrible atrocities being committed here.

FJB: On whose side?

SK: The government. The people were sabotaging. That sabotage they carried on for only a short while. They couldn't carry on for long. The suppression was very severe. People were shot down, tortured in various ways and beaten up, all kinds of things happened, whole areas were burnt, whole villages were, sort of, razed to the ground.

FJB: By the British?

SK: By the British. The suppression was very severe and all this news wouldn't come out. In Midnapore in Bengal there was a very well-organized revolutionary group. In a certain area there was no British government, the people organized themselves, they wouldn't allow the police or government people to function there. Then, as luck would have it, that

place was affected by cyclone and people suffered very much. During that time the government wouldn't help them in any way, because this was a revolutionary area. Then we organized some relief and did whatever little we could. We used to get all the information and publish the underground bulletins. We went from place to place. We carried on all these things. Then I was arrested in March or April 1944. I had gone to Patna—we used to tour—there I was arrested.

FJB: For what reason?

SK: Since I was underground, by then my warrants had been issued in almost all the states. They knew that I was underground but they were not able to catch me. In Patna, I knew I would be arrested. By that time I was sick of it because the movement was failing in spite of all that we did. We couldn't flog the movement into any great life. Most of my companions had been arrested except a few.

FJB: So that movement couldn't really go on?

SK: The movement couldn't really go on and I knew that I would more or less be picked up because I had been to Patna quite a few times. It is not such a big place where you can hide for long. In Bombay it is easier. Then I was arrested there. My cousin happened to be a high government official there and my mother and sisters were visiting him. They were very keen that I should come and spend the night with them. I said I was afraid if I came I would be picked up, but I was so sick of the whole thing that I didn't mind getting arrested. I went to them at night, had dinner with them and slept. And early in the morning the

police came and got me. From there I was transferred to Lucknow. I remained in jail under the Defence of India Act. There was no trial, I was just detained. And I remained in jail till after all the leaders were arrested. In 1945, I think in July or August, I was released.

FJB: And then soon afterwards?

SK: After release from jail, I immediately went to Simla where talks were going on. Kripalaniji and others were there. I stayed with them there for some time, and then we came down. Shortly after that I visited Gandhiji. Both of us visited Gandhiji at Poona. Gandhiji said, 'You take over the work of Kasturba Trust.' Mridula Sarabhai was the first Organizing Secretary but she fell out with Thakkar Bapa. Thakkar Bapa was one of the great Harijan workers, an old man at that time, and very close to Gandhiji. Thakkar Bapa was the Secretary and she was the Organizing Secretary at Kasturba Trust.

I was very reluctant, because for three years Kripalaniji had been in jail. I was also in jail. And if I took up the all-India work it meant that I would have to be travelling all the time all over the country. I said, 'I will take up the work for UP. I don't want the all-India position.' I didn't tell him the real reason of my reluctance, but he went on and pressed hard and harassed me so much. And when he couldn't make me agree, he told Kripalaniji, 'I asked you to give her to me.' Then he came and said, 'Well, the old man is very adamant, you better agree.' So I agreed to take up this work. That meant very hard work because I had to go to all the states, pick out the ladies and go to the remote areas to find suitable places. It meant a lot of hard work

for some time and I did this work till the Noakhali happened. I was still the Organizing Secretary when I went to Noakhali.

I went to Noakhali in 1946 October. At that time I had merely gone there for a few days, just to be with my husband, visit the place and come back. But I was held back as I told you because the local people wouldn't let me return. So I stayed there till March 1947. And then I submitted my resignation from Kasturba Trust. I said, 'I don't know. This work looks like it will last for a longer period. Kasturba Trust work is suffering. Let somebody else be appointed.' So then Gandhiji appointed somebody else there. In March I had come here only for a short while, because Bapu had extracted a promise from me that I would go on working in Noakhali for an indefinite period. That is because he understood that unless we worked for a very long period, we couldn't bring about harmony between the two communities. It was a prolonged effort. I used to often visit Delhi to see Kripalaniji. So when I came here my husband, who was then President of the Congress, had to go to Kashmir to see Sheikh Abdullah and talk to the *raja* to bring about some rapprochement between the two, in which effort, of course, he failed. But while we were there we went to Rawalpindi where riots had already broken out. We saw such horrible things there that on the way back, I decided to stay back. My husband came back to Delhi.

FJB: On the way back from Kashmir?

SK: Kashmir. Because then we had to come by the land route. We could use that mode. So I stayed there and

visited all the rural areas. Terrible atrocities had been committed there.

FJB: On whose part?

SK: The Muslims, on the Hindus.

FJB: On the Hindus?

SK: Yes, and with the connivance of the government. The government did not stir its little finger to save the Hindus there. So, then I wrote a report, day-to-day, daily diary, and maintained as to what I saw. And when I returned I went straight to Gandhiji and gave it to him. We had reports of what had happened in those areas, but not to the extent as I saw. Mine was the most graphic report that Gandhiji got. In fact, he was visibly shaken with all the things I told him I had seen. I was very excited. I said, 'You must do something. Go to war, do this and that and all kinds of things.' But then Gandhiji quietened me.

That was in March or early April. During that time talks for the independence of the country were going on. There were tortuous negotiations. And then by July things were so bad and uncertain here that I really didn't feel like going back to Noakhali. I stayed on here watching the situation.

Then by July refugees from Punjab side started coming to India. Then there was an absolute stream of them. There was a deluge of people pouring into this country. So then I got involved in this work. I organized a relief committee on behalf of the Congress. Meeting thousands of people, this was much worse than what had happened in Noakhali.

And the atrocities were worse. Noakhali shocked us but this was beyond shock, it was too much. I collected people, started camps, started reception centres. And mine was the only organization in fact, for the first two months, then the government organization came and took over.

FJB: Where were you when Gandhi was killed?

SK: Here in Delhi. A few days before Gandhiji's death, there was an attempt to kill him. That day, all of a sudden our driver came rushing. He was listening to the radio. He came rushing and he said, 'Gandhiji has been killed'. Kripalaniji laughed. He said, 'Yes, yes, he has', because the previous time there was an attempt and he had not been killed. So he said, 'Yes, yes, these are all rumours.' But he insisted. He said, 'No, I heard it on the radio.' So we immediately got into our car and rushed to Birla House, and then we found that Gandhiji had been killed.

FJB: Can you say a little bit more about what happened? You know, when you went to Birla House?

SK: When we went to Birla House Gandhiji was lying in the room, and there were absolutely distracted crowds in the house and outside. People were just pouring in. We were ourselves distracted, we didn't know what to do. We were so overwhelmed with grief ourselves. Then, after a while, we had calmed down. People were just sitting around. And as I watched his figure lying on the floor with all kinds of people surrounding him, people from various walks of life, not necessarily political people. Some were doing political work, some were social workers, some were just his personal friends. And I saw that among the people who were

surrounding him some were inimical to each other. They were not friendly with each other, but everybody was mourning him. Everybody felt that he is my own dear one who has gone. Gandhiji's love was such, that each one felt that he is my own special person. So I found that they were all in their diversity, in their disharmony. They were all united in this one great soul who had brought love and harmony. It was a very moving experience. We stayed there, until late in the night. Then we came home. Then early in the morning we again reached there.

FJB: Can you say a little more what happened on the next day? I have gathered that Gandhiji was put out on the roof?

SK: Yes, to show to the people. Kripalaniji was one of the persons who helped to raise him. He was taken just near the parapet to show to the people and the tremendous crowd, who were weeping.

FJB: Actually weeping?

SK: Oh yes, a lot of people were actually weeping. And a terrible wave of grief, genuine. People were as if stricken. The whole town was stricken. You could see everywhere as if a very great disaster had happened. And then when we took out his funeral procession, there was also the same thing. All of us there, absolutely, the grief was so very genuine. Of course, for us it was as if our family member, the head of the family, had died. For us it was as much as that. Then I was also in the train that went to Allahabad taking his ashes. I accompanied the ashes in the train. In Allahabad we walked all the way from the station to the river to cast

his ashes. The whole country was, as it were, flooded, swept in grief, I can't express it really. Children, women, men, all of them weeping and stunned with grief.

FJB: When Gandhi was alive did he often have children around him?

SK: Oh, yes. He was very fond of children. Whenever children came, he would pat them and joke with them, with his big laugh and grin. He would run around with them.

FJB: Did Gandhi ever talk to you about his own children?

SK: Not like that. Sometimes when he was explaining education and other things, how he had educated them in Africa, how he made them to work after all. This whole thesis of 'education through work' didn't come to him through study though this theory is already well recognized in the world. It came to him through his own experience. Experiments with his own children, and the children of the inmates in the Phoenix farm and other places. Hiralal, his son who had gone astray, sometime came here. I saw him here in Birla House. Once he came early in the morning. I saw Bapu walking in the garden with another person very similar to him in looks, somewhat like Bapu, with same height and so on. The manner of walking was same too. So I told Kripalaniji, 'Look, who is with Gandhiji?' Then he recognized. He said, 'This is his son.'

FJB: Harilal?

SK: Harilal. Devadas, of course, we knew very well, and other boys we knew too, but Harilal, I had never seen.

FJB: How did you know Devadas?

SK: Devadas was here. He was the editor of the *Hindustan Times*.

FJB: In Delhi?

SK: Yes. Delhi. Devadas's whole family we knew. We were visiting each other and meeting him. He was very social and very jolly, very outward-going person.

FJB: Could I ask you, when you look back, you know the things you have been talking about, what would you say did Gandhiji mean for your life?

SK: Well, I have acknowledged two—I won't say guru, because I am not that way inclined to have any guru—guides to my life. One is Gandhiji and the other is my husband. I don't recognize anybody else. These two people have meant for me, they have widened my horizon, they have taken me out of a small house to the house of the world, they brought the world to me. They have made my consciousness more sensitive about my contact with the world, about things that are happening.

FJB: In which way do you mean consciousness?

SK: Social consciousness. I always had it, I wouldn't say that I never had it, I always had it, my parents were very good people. But they have given me depth, they have brought more light and knowledge to my life, and they have given greater meaning to my life.

FJB: We spoke about *satyagraha* and your involvement in it and the Quit India Movement. What, to you, is the essential meaning of *satyagraha*?

SK: *Satyagraha* is, one, we should not tolerate injustice. The fight against injustice can be carried out by non-violent methods. It is not necessary that the resistance against injustice and wrong should be by violence. If the resistance is by violence it is bound to bring about or generate other factors which are evil, which give rise to greater problems. But if the resistance is by non-violence then its after-effects are not bad, no further evil is generated out of that. This can bring about peace and harmony. This is how I look upon *satyagraha*.

FJB: During the time when the sabotage went on, can you say how you felt then, did you feel a conflict?

SK: We felt nothing. We were so excited with the whole thing. We were just young people and we were full of anger. Whatever Gandhi might say, we were not *satyagrahis* to that extent. We were full of anger against the British for taking us away. We were overwhelmed with the things that were happening because just in a trice they were taking away. We were not even expecting their arrest. Rather foolishly I think we should have expected it. But even Gandhiji wasn't expecting to be taken away just then; nor the others. And then immediately such atrocities unleashed on the people! The people demonstrated. Shootings, beatings, all kinds of such things happened all over the country. The immediate violence of the government was so great that our reaction was also very violent. Violent in the sense, somehow or other this government must be taken away. We were not caring about anything, our principles were very skin deep.

FJB: But what you just said, did this slowly develop in you?

SK: I don't know, just reaction.

FJB: But your feeling about non-violence?

SK: I consider that as I grow, study, read, and as I grow older, I am understanding it. At that time I didn't understand all this.

FJB: Do you feel that this was generally true? Gandhi says one of the rules is not to be angry.

SK: There should not be anger.

FJB: The first thing, not to be angry. Do you feel that generally people were angry?

SK: For the most of us in the Congress, this was a method of fight. The physical aspect of it, the subjective aspect of it, to what extent how many of us understood, is doubtful. A few people, few leaders, who were really studying Gandhiji's methods, or who were very closely in touch with Gandhiji, they must have understood.

FJB: Who were they?

SK: Well, I don't think even Jawaharlal understood. He understood it partially, I think. Kripalani may understand, Vinoba understood, and, to my mind, Kaka Kalekar. A few people who have really studied Gandhiji and gone into the whole thing, they have understood him. Otherwise most of us Congress workers, we knew that non-violent method is the best because we are an unarmed people, we have to fight against a mighty armed force and we and our people

cannot do anything else; this is the best method. So, to most of us Congress workers it was that. But to those Gandhians who had really studied Gandhiji, who understood Gandhiji, for them it had a greater content. But for most of us it was just a strategy, a technique, a method of fighting—a successful method of fighting.

FJB: For example, those who took part in the Salt March?

SK: They must have understood.

FJB: Do you know some of them?

SK: Well, I don't know.

FJB: I would like to talk to some.

SK: I don't know, I never lived in Gujarat. I don't know these people so much, and I came into politics much later, after 1939.

FJB: But what you said about the feelings of the people in Congress; that was pretty representative?

SK: I think so, I think honestly that is the position; a few of us understand, I have come to understand because I live with my husband who is constantly thinking, writing, talking of these things. And a few others who read and studied, those *satyagrahis*, those who are with Vinoba, those who really studied.

FJB: As you could serve Gandhi, and as you say you must have studied it and wrote about it, can you see any change in Gandhi during the time you knew him, in regard to *satyagraha*, or in other respects?

SK: As far as *satyagraha* is concerned, I don't think there was any change. But one thing, only one thing that impresses me about Gandhiji is, he was a practical man, he was not a theoretician. His thinking evolved along with work. For instance, take his constructive work. He started with *khadi* and spinning. Gradually he evolved 21 kinds of constructive work.

FJB: Twenty one kinds? What were they?

SK: Various. I don't know whether I can count them all; *khadi*, *gram udyog*, Hindu-Muslim unity, uplift of women, uplift of Harijan, *sarvodaya* or uplift of the village, basic education, Hindi, and so on.

FJB: Well, that gives me an idea.

SK: These are the various activities he took up, but as he progressed, he started these one by one, as the need arose in the course of his practical life. And gradually it evolved that it is all a comprehensive whole. He had the consciousness within him. But this whole evolution of his thesis, that the non-violent way of life, is all pervasive and all comprehensive, and this is the way by which not only you can resist injustice and evil, but you also build up the whole life. I think this gradually came as he progressed, day by day, step by step. And the ultimate thing he came to, basic education is, I think, the highest thing that he has evolved. If we really go about the correct way, then we should start with basic education, and then only the whole comprehensive *Sarvodaya Samaj* that he wants to build is possible.

FJB: Many people say that Gandhiji's approach would have worked only in India at the time of the British rule, but wouldn't work anywhere else. What do you think about that?

SK: It wouldn't have worked with Hitler, I don't think so.

FJB: But Gandhi seemed to have thought so in that way?

SK: If it is soul force and there is not one Gandhi, but we also became like Gandhi, if the whole army was like Gandhi, perhaps it would have worked with Hitler. But as things were, there was only one Gandhi. All of us were partial, as I told you. What made us, the way we looked at it and we worked at our very earthy and low level, I don't think we could have moved with others. It may not have worked with others. Of course, one thing does work—non-cooperation.

FJB: Non-cooperation?

SK: The non-cooperation aspect of the *satyagraha*. Often in our situation where the government consisted of very few people, and we were in large numbers. If we withdrew cooperation they couldn't function, a handful of Britishers couldn't have functioned. In a similar situation, whether it is British or anybody else, we could have made them come to a standstill. When the sanction behind the administration, the sanction of popular support, is completely withdrawn, then whether it is a Hitler or anybody, could not function. What could Hitler have done? To that extent that was possible.

FJB: I actually don't know how close you are to your husband's writing. But I have a quote here. He says:

The Indian effort has always been to resolve apparent contradictions through a dialectal process of its own. This does not require destructive revolutions to eliminate the thesis and the antithesis and establish on their destruction a temporary and unstable synthesis. Coordination is achieved through the force of thought and by virtue of certain basic ideas. The genius of the Indian people is constructive, catholic and assimilative. It is neither negative nor destructive.

SK: As far as I can explain, by this he means that the Hindu way of thinking is basically catholic. The whole history of Hindu religion has shown that, whenever we have come in touch with any other new thought, we have not conflicted. Even if we have conflicted, ultimately we have assimilated, and we have given a place to it. That is why we have hundreds of gods and goddesses, hundreds of ways of thinking and different political and philosophical theories, sometimes contradicting with each other. But somehow or other we have found a basic harmony between them all. There have been persecutions, religious persecutions also, but on the whole they have been less. There is an element of toleration and assimilation. So he thinks that our genius is not destructive.

FJB: You have been teaching History and you know a great deal about Indian history. I see that in terms of the way of life, that is no inter-marriage, no inter-dining, and so on, the caste system remained quite strong. Is that true?

Assimilation seems to have been more in terms of ideas and beliefs; but the way of life, how much was that open to this force?

SK: You are right in thinking that in philosophy, in ideals, there was more of assimilation. But as far as the way of life is concerned, instead of destroying, we built a wall and came behind each section.

FJB: You built a wall?

SK: Yes. And we remain in the wall instead of destroying it; a little wall for ourselves, a little wall for this caste, and a little wall for the other caste. We, sort of, became an exclusive set, instead of conflicting.

FJB: Instead of conflicting with what came in, you absorbed what you could, but within a fairly strong wall, is that what you mean?

SK: Yes, I think so. Now that you put this idea, this is the way I can explain.

FJB: I was puzzled by it. You know, these are things I am just beginning to think about.

SK: No, you see, there have been caste persecutions also but comparatively less. Each one formed a rigid frozen area for itself, each section.

FJB: So, this is how you have solved the problem?

SK: This is how we have existed, yes. We have solved the problem. Instead of killing with the sword, we have not gone with the sword. We have done, once in a while. We can't say we haven't, but this is the way we have done.

FJB: What is for you the real genius of India, of the Indian people or Indian culture, whichever way you want to put it?

SK: I don't know. What shall I say?

FJB: What I mean is what distinguishes the Indian, the genius of the Indian people, the Indian culture from others?

SK: At the moment I don't see any good qualities. They may live more by thought than by work, I mean the higher you go.

FJB: More by thought than by work.

SK: That is what I think. I may not even be correct. What have we achieved by thinking, what new contributions have we given? It was all right in the early days, but now... What are our defects? If you ask me, I can tell better.

FJB: What do you feel these are?

SK: We are a lazy people, we don't do work, we are impractical, unmethodical. Basically we are not, the whole country is not, hard working. Some sections are. For instance, Punjab is like America—hard working, outward going and extrovert. But the rest of the country is more of introvert.

FJB: But wasn't Gandhi quite methodical?

SK: Gandhiji was. That's why he achieved so much. But, of course, this is the average type. There are thousands of very hard working, very methodical people. But, on the whole, if you ask why don't we achieve things, after all, we have been carrying on with these plans and other things for

25 years. We have come to this economic chaos at the moment, what is it due to?

FJB: You mean specifically the economic situation?

SK: In the country partly. No, I am not talking of railways, but in general. We have spent a lot money, a lot of thinking, a lot of work. Despite all that our condition is very bad at the moment. That is due to unmethodical working. We make plans, but when we come to execute, the whole thing goes off at a tangent. That is because the persistent and methodical working that is needed is lacking. Also, as I said, we are carried by talk, doctrines and dogmas. We are talking of socialism. What is the meaning of socialism if I can't bring bread or create employment for that man? At the upper echelons, we are just fond of talking. We want to square the practical situation to the theory that we advocate, not the theory to the practical situation prevailing.

FJB: Let me read you one more quote. It is from a Western interpreter, Lannoy, about *satyagraha*. He says, 'However the dialectic of *satyagraha* ultimately rests on the mystical premise that realization of truth mutually liberates both parties and establishes them in love for all.'

SK: That is the meaning of *satyagraha*.

FJB: You would say this is the meaning?

SK: That is the real meaning of *satyagraha*. We may not achieve it. I may not go up to it.

FJB: But when you look back, look at the movement as a whole, would you say many people achieved it?

SK: No, a few people. But that was the objective laid down by Gandhiji. There was purity in his approach and in his thinking. But as far as we are concerned, it got more and more diluted.

FJB: We could start talking a little bit about Gandhi as a man, as a human being. Delving into your own experience, what do you feel are his outstanding qualities?

SK: We are a theoretical people. We think, and we don't work. Of course, India is such a vast country and people have different characteristics.

FJB: But I meant Gandhiji himself. What sort of man was he? What were his outstanding qualities? I would really like to get a little bit of an idea of Gandhiji as a man, as a human being, as a person.

SK: We revere him so much that it is difficult to say. One point which everybody felt—educated, uneducated, people of all levels who came in touch with him—was his abounding love. Everybody felt that he is my own and we mean to him something, that any little thing of ours is precious to him. Every human being was precious to him and there was a big horizon of love in which he kept people in; that was number one quality. Then he was also a teacher. We have had so many outstanding leaders in the last generation, but I don't think anybody else had the quality to develop the best qualities in you. He assessed you, gave you the kind of work you were capable of and guided you all the time. That is why he was able to build up such a big cadre of workers.

Take Nehru, for instance, not a single man did he build up. But Gandhiji built up so many people, each one of us got something out of him, he trained us. Also he was a very strict teacher. He was very meticulous. His clothes and even his little cup, he would put in the right place. He will put the spoon in the right place. He would want us to do things with great precision and meticulous care. That was also his teacher's quality. And then his leadership, his utmost and absolute truth in life. There was no possibility of slurring over anything with him.

FJB: What do you mean by slurring?

SK: Many times we accept the truth, but in implementing it we make compromises. But with him there was no compromise. Truth was truth, and he wouldn't allow any deviation from what he considered to be truth. We would many times compromise, go here and there, but he will not do that. He lived it. Truth was something very vital to him, that was the motive force in his life, and that is why he was able to understand this country better. As for the problems of this country, he went to the right thing. We, our academicians, other people, they don't, because their thinking is clouded with all their book learning and other things, they don't get at the real problems. Gandhiji was able to get at the real problem of the country. That is why he could get the real solutions, even up to today, nobody else has given the real solutions to the country.

I will give you an instance. Gandhiji said that our economy should be decentralized; that we take the industrial units to the villages and so on. After freedom all

these Western educated people, and glamourised with the Western success and progress, they all wanted the big industries and so on. We did it for some years. We found that it didn't solve our basic problem of unemployment and poverty. Unemployment necessarily brings poverty. Then *khadi* was neglected very badly. When the challenge of unemployment came before them, these people, who did not believe in Gandhiji's theories, who had no regard for Gandhiji, these bureaucrats, ICS fellows and others, said. 'Well, there is no other way, we have to start the *charkha*, we have to do the village industries, this will absorb more people'. So with their preconceived notions, which they had derived from their books and Western thought, they had not understood this fact. Gandhiji was the real doctor, he knew the real malady and he had given the real solution. And I feel he was able to do that because he never allowed his thinking to be clouded over with non-essential things. He was able to penetrate and go to the right point, and then think as to how that problem is to be solved.

FJB: Did he ever talk to you about his mother and father?

SK: No, not to me personally.

FJB: From your own feelings, what do you think they meant for him?

SK: He has written so many times. Of course, he was very attached to his mother and he had very great reverence. In those days in an Indian house the whole atmosphere was such that you revered your father and mother, he did

put father and mother next to God, sort of, and respected them. And in his generation, he was brought up in that atmosphere.

FJB: This atmosphere was general?

SK: Oh yes, it was general. You dare not speak before your father. I mean people showed very great respect and it was inculcated in us that mother is God, father is God, teacher is God and you have to respect them. These are the Indian traditions. Now, of course, everything is gone, but he was nurtured in that tradition.

FJB: You mean now it is changing?

SK: Now it has changed, very much, very much.

FJB: But at that time it was very strong?

SK: Yes, yes.

FJB: What influence did it have on him that his mother was a *Jain*? Do you think that affected his ideas?

SK: Yes, I do, certainly. I think his Jain faith was also to a degree responsible for his non-violence, his great respect for life.

FJB: His father and mother came from different castes, is that right?

SK: No, I don't think so.

FJB: No? But his father was a *baniya*.

SK: His mother was also *baniya*. Inter-caste marriage was a very rare thing, and not in that part of the world.

FJB: If you look at Gandhi's life as a whole, what do you feel are the most formative influences?

SK: Of course, his parents, his family and the religious influence. Then he talks of Tolstoy, Thoreau, *Gita* and Bible. He himself talks of these, and certainly the Bible formed a very big part of his life, also *Gita*, both these books.

FJB: What did Hinduism really mean to him? He didn't follow a lot of the practices.

SK: Hindu religion is a catholic religion, it embraces within it various kinds of thinking and beliefs. So a Hindu, a real Hindu, doesn't incur caste, he is a real philosopher. Hindu is much above caste and all those petty social restrictions. A real *sadhu*, a real sublime person who has reached the height of spiritual life, would not bother about caste, untouchability, and so on. He is always above these things. So Gandhiji was like that, also quite true to tradition.

FJB: You mean that he was above that?

SK: He was absolutely above that. Many of us are above that, but above that in our thinking; but when it comes to actual practice we slide back. But with him, he was absolutely above that.

FJB: Were you ever at any of his prayer meetings?

SK: Oh, yes, several. Most often whenever I was with him, we were at his prayers.

FJB: Can you give me some idea, how they were?

SK: His prayers were a kind of synthetic, where he took bits from all religions. Anything good in any religion was

acceptable to him. And he tried to make it a general prayer where people of all faiths could join. When the people were gathered he would come with two or three people who are his closest associates, and sit on the dais and then the prayers will start. He would have a Muslim prayer, then a Buddhist prayer, then recitation from *Gita* and a hymn. That's all, a simple prayer like that.

FJB: How long would it take? About half an hour?

SK: It took about half an hour or so, may be a little more. *Gita* recitation sometimes took more time.

FJB: You know about Erikson's book and all the books in the West which relate to Gandhi's ideas and to his psychological makeup. I should like to read you one passage here:

Satyagraha has projected the traditional ethical laws in the realm of social action. This is the crucial transformation and its source is not to be found in Hinduism nor in any other Indian value system but in the unique psychological makeup of Gandhi himself.

Could you comment on that?

SK: *Satyagraha*? I don't agree with that. I think that it is not a new thought in Hindu religion that you pitch your spiritual and moral force against brutal force. I don't think it is.

FJB: You don't think it's really rooted in Gandhi's psychological makeup?

SK: It was rooted in Gandhi's psychological makeup but it was also in the atmosphere of India, it is not an unknown Indian concept.

FJB: In which way was it rooted in Gandhi's psychological makeup?

SK: I think it is his Jain tradition. It is a Jain tradition. Non-killing is a basic tenet of Jainism. And his mother's influence also. He had strictly enjoined not to deviate from it. And then his own, as he developed he transferred that from personal life to the public and social life. You see, a Jain adheres to non-violence in his personal life alone. But Gandhiji thought that this concept of non-violence can be used in the social life. That is his biggest contribution. All of us more or less are non-violent in our personal lives, more or less.

FJB: You see, I am interested in Gandhiji in terms of the whole development of consciousness of East and West, and their coming together in some way.

SK: The blend of both.

FJB: Yes, in some way. Now, to do this I would like to get a better understanding of Eastern consciousness. And I want to ask a few questions. One thing that often strikes when you read about India and Indian culture is the whole idea of *ahamkara*.

SK: *Ahamkara*. That's ego.

FJB: Yes, can you say how you feel about this experience? What does this whole concept mean to you?

SK: I am afraid I can't answer this question. I haven't given any thought to this matter at all, ever.

FJB: Another question is the concept of *atman*. What does that mean to you?

SK: *Atman*, as I understand is your soul which eternally develops, that doesn't die, that persists even after death. Ultimately it harmonizes in the cosmos, it gets blended in the cosmos. That is my idea of *atman*, it may be very crude, I don't know.

FJB: Do you feel this is an important aspect of Indian life?

SK: Yes, this is. People do believe in that. Yes, they firmly believe in this, of life after death. The *atman* progressing through all the different lives, and ultimately when it has attained perfection, it merges with perfection, that is God.

FJB: Now, this interests me very much—the merging with perfection. Does it mean that a personal identity somehow remains?

SK: At that stage it doesn't remain. *Moksha*, the idea of salvation, is that ultimately you, as an individual, do not remain. Even the separate *atman* does not exist anymore. *Atman* is an aspect of godliness in you, however imperfect, and the aim is to shed the imperfection little by little. You can't shed it in one life, you go through various stages of different lives, till that imperfect godliness has become perfect and when it becomes perfect it does not remain separate.

FJB: So in that sense no individual identity remains?

SK: No, no. I am putting it very crudely because I said that I belong to Brahmo Samaj who do not believe in the other life. Ram Mohan Roy started a new reform Hindu sect called Brahmo Samaj. I am from that family, not my husband. You should have asked him that question. We do not think that life persists after death, we have been very greatly influenced by Christian thought. We feel life ends here.

FJB: But in Christian thought there is life after death.

SK: In the sense that the soul is not going on, again and again. You don't believe in rebirth.

FJB: No, the Christian religion does. Well, we did, for the first three hundred years.

SK: We do not believe in rebirth, although my own ideas are very vague because I am very greatly influenced by my husband's thinking also. I have heard all this from him. I am trying to tell you what I have imperfectly understood on how the Hindus think.

FJB: It is important to me to know that there is such a school in Hinduism. You call yourself a Hindu?

SK: We are Hindus, we are among the Hindu religion. Rabindranath Tagore belonged to us. There are many eminent people who belong to us. This was an early nineteenth century movement.

FJB: Yes.

SK: There were many vices in the Hindu community which we wanted to get rid of. We don't believe in caste system.

We don't have caste marriages. We were the earliest who tried really to help the Harijans to come up. And perhaps ours is the one community where nobody ever thinks of caste. We never write down what is your caste. Of course, the family initially had some caste, but we never think in these terms. Also we dare not believe in rebirth. We don't believe in idol worship. In our temples we have no idol. In fact, our form of worship is very similar to the Church worship.

FJB: It is often said that in the East the whole experience of time is different from the West.

SK: We take things easy. We are lazy, yes, lazy in the sense this is what people think we are, that life after death matters to us so much that your aim is *moksha*, salvation. Because your aim is salvation, you are thinking of the life which will come after death, not of this life, therefore you don't bother about things. Things move on slowly. That is one idea but that is a crude idea.

FJB: But doesn't what happens to you in the next life—if we believe in rebirth—influence what you do in this life?

SK: Yes, of course.

FJB: But you still don't do?

SK: It is a very crude concept that time does not matter. I don't know how to put it. Many people think like that. But if you take a really evolved person, suppose he is sitting and thinking, he is doing spiritual and mental work all the time. It's not that he is wasting time. Take for instance,

this great sage of ours, Aurobindo. Suppose he was sitting there and thinking, apparently doing nothing. But he was doing something very vital. He was making the fullest use of his time. To you or to a Westerner it could appear that he is wasting his time, that time doesn't matter to him. But we would think that he was utilizing the time to double its value.

FJB: Talking about Gandhi, on the one hand, he was in this tradition, whereas on the other, he was extremely punctual.

SK: Yes, that is his Western influence. I should think so, very much.

FJB: That is not typical for an Indian.

SK: No, no! The people are lazy here. People are slipshod. He is meticulous, and punctual. In many things he is greatly influenced by the West.

FJB: Another aspect of the East that we often talk about is, in the West we take good and evil as opposites, whereas for you it is not opposites. It is like the lotus flower, a beautiful flower comes out of the mud. So you have a different feeling about life in terms of your not experiencing so much in terms of opposites.

SK: Yes, I think perhaps that is correct, because we don't think that there is absolute evil or absolute good. But there are modifications in between various stages.

FJB: Can you say more about this? To me, this is very important.

SK: Our history and our tradition are replete with individuals who may have started as wild men but found salvation ultimately. From evil they became good gradually. Of course, in every religion there are such stories, not that it is in our religion alone. We do not think that this is so absolutely evil and that nothing can be got out of it. And then the idea is that the spark of God is in you, even in an evil man there is godliness which is overshadowed by evil, and there is a possibility of that godly spirit in him gradually developing. So how can we think in absolute terms of evil and good?

FJB: What did this mean in Gandhi's situation? Sometimes I get the feeling that he did experience. For instance, when he talks about 'soul force' and 'brute force', and soul and body, I get the feeling that there is something in him that he experienced the opposites very strongly. Do you think this is true?

SK: Good and evil are there though perhaps the dividing line is not so clear. Certainly in his life he did experience both good and evil. In his personal life also. He was struggling all the time. For instance, take his sex life. He considered that he should overcome it and there was struggle going on all the time in him about it.

FJB: But there I feel that the opposites are strong, the soul force, and sex was connected with body, brute force.

SK: Yes, yes.

FJB: This seems to me a division that is not typical for the Indian situation, or wouldn't you say that?

SK: I don't think that is so very untypical. In a man of his capacity, passion, ability and energy, perhaps the sex force was powerful, which he sublimated and brought to that level. In others it may be a little dormant and not so powerful.

FJB: From what you know, did he believe in the law of *karma*?

SK: Yes he did.

FJB: In which way? There are so many versions that I can see in the law of *karma*. You know, different people giving different meanings.

SK: As I said, we believe that you progress through various stages of life. Ultimately you come to *moksha*, the final salvation. So as you do in this life, according to that you will get your next life. If you have led a good life, then you come to a better life in your next world, which takes you nearer to what's *moksha*; that is the law of *karma* as I understand it.

FJB: And this is how Gandhi understood it?

SK: I hope so, I don't know. I am very crude in all these religious ideas. I am not explaining Hinduism at all because I have not studied it.

FJB: I think what you say is very helpful to me.

SK: I am just talking to you like a man on the street, as one understands.

FJB: *Dharma* is being understood and interpreted in many ways.

SK: The real meaning of *dharma* is duty. Why we confuse *dharma* with religion is that in the ancient society, people's real duties were religious ones. Their social and religious duties were all intertwined. What your social duty was also your religious duty. In the ancient society, therefore, you had to perform the *yagnas*, you had to give alms to people, and so on and so forth. They were considered both religious and social.

FJB: And how do you know what your duty is?

SK: By tradition, by history, from teachers and as per your conscience. Conscience also is partly derived out of all the ideas that you absorb from your environment.

FJB: Do you feel that Gandhiji's understanding of *dharma* was different from either the traditional one or alternative ways of understanding it?

SK: By *dharma* he meant duty.

FJB: I would like to ask you now a few questions about Gandhi and Christianity. Do you have any experience with, or have you heard Gandhi say something in this regard?

SK: Mind you, he would often quote. He would quote from any religious books when he was talking and he had made a very thorough study of the Bible. Not only studied, he had assimilated. It was part of his life. Just as *Gita* was part of his life, Bible was also part of his life. He would comment on the Sermon on the Mount, and several other parts, anything from the Bible if it comes out, he would immediately quote. And it was really interwoven in his

system, in his whole way of thinking. Just as Gita was, in the same way Bible was.

FJB: Would you say the Koran was interwoven in him in the same way?

SK: I don't think so. Of course, he would quote also from the Koran. He tried to study it. He had immersed himself in these two books, but not to that extent in the Koran, that is what I would feel. I may or may not be correct.

FJB: What struck me when I was in Sevagram, in his *ashram* in 1965 is, the picture of Jesus in his room. And I wondered why this was the only picture in his room. It struck me. I didn't expect it.

SK: I don't somehow remember. But, of course, he was a man to whom sacrifice meant a great deal, and Jesus was one figure who expresses the extreme sacrifice that would appeal to him very much.

FJB: In which way did he emphasize sacrifice?

SK: In everything, on work, life, everything. 'You must learn to sacrifice', that was one of his big teachings.

FJB: Would he say that to you?

SK: Yes, he would say 'sacrifice', 'give up'. All the time he would say it. When I went to work with him in Noakhali, he sometimes used to put absurd conditions which we very dishonestly said yes, and never meant to keep. I remember one incident. I was working in Noakhali. He came afterwards. Seeing everything he said, 'You now make up your mind when to resign from Kasturba Trust.'

You will dedicate all your life to the East, here, to bring about peace.'

With my husband staying here, how was I going to dedicate my life there? I had no desire to give him up. But he was after my life. 'No you must, this is the only way to do.' So I said, 'All right.' I said all right with great sorrow in my heart. But then situation arose in such a way that I came away because the trouble started here. The Hindu-Muslim riots started in the West. I immediately rushed here. I spent about 10 to 12 years of my life only in this work, either there or here. Then he didn't even remember that he had asked me to sacrifice. He said, 'Yes, sacrifice everything, your husband, your family, everything, and stay here.'

FJB: He said that?

SK: Oh yes, he said. Every time he would say that. To girls, young girls, he would say 'Don't wear jewellery, be simple, give up this thing', and to any number of married people he would say, 'Give up your sex life, stay *brahmachari*.' That was sacrifice. After all he expected sacrifice from everybody in some way or other.

FJB: Were people able to meet that?

SK: Not to that extent, but he did influence people slightly. From my own life I would say I would have led just normal life otherwise. But because of him we gave all our time to this country and the work. He does influence them, and sometimes his extreme demand of sacrifice has its own repercussions also. People have gone, afterwards left everything and there have been reactions, that also happen. But he was a great one for demanding sacrifice.

FJB: You mean that Gandhi left everything?

SK: Suppose he had demanded extreme simplicity from a young girl—I have seen such girls—like absolutely white dress—that also very crude—and shaved head, I mean, have short hair. And then those girls, after a while, left everything and became normal young girls fond of clothes and jewellery and are leading happy lives.

FJB: They reacted against that?

SK: Yes, that does happen.

FJB: Did that happen quite often?

SK: Well, it did happen sometimes. Sometimes people were unhappy.

FJB: Earlier we talked quite a bit about *brahmacharya*. I sometimes get the feeling that, at least during certain periods of his life, he felt marriage was quite inferior in itself to celibacy. Do you feel this is true?

SK: He had some peculiar notions about celibacy and marriage. I have never understood him. I can understand that you don't get involved in family life and because the big challenge of the country's freedom was before you. But the over-emphasis he gave to this is beyond my understanding.

FJB: You feel he over-emphasized this?

SK: It must have meant something to him. Unless it meant something to him he wouldn't have done it. It did mean something to him. He was not the man to do anything unless it came from within.

FJB: Gandhi came pretty close to Christianity but never became a Christian.

SK: That is also peculiarly the Hindu way of thinking. We can absorb things without changing the label. We have many great people, religious people, who are above all religious delimitations. They have absorbed the best of all religions, but they need not change their religion. There are lots of people like that.

FJB: Who really absorbed like Gandhiji did?

SK: There are people, really religious people, like that.

FJB: At one point Gandhi said he did not want to become a Christian because he didn't want to be forgiven for his sins, but he wanted to be free from sin. Could you comment on that?

SK: I don't know. I can't say. Free from sin, yes, I can understand. He wanted to evolve in such a way that he was above sin; that is a real Hindu idea.

FJB: But on the other hand he was certainly not conceited.

SK: No.

FJB: He never thought he was perfect.

SK: No, poor man. He was all the while thinking that 'I am very imperfect'. He was very conscious of his imperfections.

FJB: So that means on the one hand there is awareness of his imperfections, on the other, aspiration to be without sin and perfect.

SK: That was his effort. He was striving towards it.

FJB: But would you say this is quite typical for the Hindu?

SK: Yes, I think so. This is quite typical. We have so many hymns and songs to say why I am sinner and take me out of this and that. And one hymn he was very fond of was, 'who is so bad, fallen, and full of lust, like myself?' The words of the song mean that, and he was fond of that song, that hymn was sung quite often.

FJB: At the prayer meetings?

SK: At the prayer meetings.

FJB: What other hymns can you remember?

SK: There was the one which is very famous, which is supposed to be 'What is a true *vaishnav*? One who forgives those who injure him.' It goes on like that. Then there are so many songs of Tagore which he liked. One was, 'You go alone, whatever happens troubles may come on the way, the storm may come, your feet may bleed with the stones, people may not listen to you, but you go ahead.' He used to be fond of that song also.

The new reformers were full of vigour and protest. It is a non-conformist family I come from. They were more strong they used to be my mother, father and my grandfather. My grandfather was a religious preacher. He took up this and he spent his whole life in this, so they sacrificed a lot also for their own beliefs. They were persecuted also because when they preached that there is no caste, and then you should not worship an idol and things like that,

naturally they were very badly persecuted by their own community, by the Hindus. Persecuted by social boycott and tortured in every possible way, they had to go through a lot of suffering.

FJB: I would like to talk to you a little bit about changing ethos of society. We talked about quite a few things in general. But how are the things we talked about so far related to Gandhiji's ideas on society and the social order? Is there connection between these?

SK: Gandhiji believed in a society. Though he was a Hindu, he did not agree with all these Hindu restrictive ideas about society. He was opposed to that, and he did not believe in caste system. He believed that Hindus have done a great deal of injustice to the lower castes. He believed in equality of man so firmly that all these notions that the Hindus had, were repugnant to him. That way he was a very big democrat.

FJB: When you say 'all those notions', what do you really mean?

SK: The usual things. Life in a traditional Indian society—keep the women down, believe in caste, believe in untouchability, have your meals separately, and all such things. He was a man of great justice. He was opposed to any form of inequity or injustice perpetrated in any part of life. And if that stood against any of our traditional thinking, he was right out to break it.

I am brought up in a family where women and men were equal. In that reform section nobody ever bothered.

Yet I know that there are very few men really, who believe that woman is equal to man, that's my idea.

FJB: Even in Europe?

SK: Even in Europe. Everywhere, there is a sniggering idea against women.

FJB: Even in your religious group?

SK: In our religious group we give equal opportunities to girls and boys. They study together, and in various walks of life women work and all that. But I am talking of modern men, even they have a feeling that women is a little inferior. All the digs and the jokes about women, even in the best you see. It is a common idea, but if there is one man who did not think woman to be inferior to man, that was Gandhiji. He had very strong ideas about it and I will show you how he expressed those ideas.

Not only did he preach and work to bring up women, so that justice is done to them, but also if there was a work of challenge he wouldn't hesitate to send a woman there if he thought the woman was capable of doing that work. If there was something to be done and he had to pick up from amongst his workers, he would send a man most suited to do the work. If a woman fitted the bill, she would go. That shows how much confidence he had in women.

He wrote something very interesting. In our ancient literature we had a well-known law giver. Manu has said most disparaging things about women. Most disparaging things—that a woman is inferior, that she should be kept like this, and many other things. And there are other literature also, where legal and other rights have been totally

denied to women. He wrote, 'I don't believe that woman is man's inferior in any way. Rather I think that she is superior to man in so many things—in sacrifice, in determination.'

He said, 'I consider woman to be man's superior, man is born of woman.' Then, 'Woman, when she makes up her mind, when she makes the right determination, she doesn't deviate from it, she is capable of greater sacrifice'. And then he said that if in our sacred literature thoughts contrary to these ideas have been expressed, which do not square with other ideas expressed in the same text, then a committee should be appointed to go through all the texts and expurgate all such sections that are unjust, and that do not square with our reasoning.

FJB: How did this idea of society relate to *varnadharma*?

SK: *Varnadharma* is an ancient thing which we are dragging along. How did *varnadharma* come into existence? *Varnadharma* came out of occupation of people in a very simple society, in a pastoral society. In a pastoral society we had four sections of people. And out of that it came, this is just a hangover of the past. It has really no meaning as far as I am concerned. I think that we are just dragging an old thing with us.

FJB: But Gandhiji was not in favour of this division?

SK: In the real sense of *varnadharma*, it should be that if you are not a *brahmin* but you have the qualities, the real qualities of a *brahmin* then you should be treated as a *brahmin*. What are the real qualities of a *brahmin*? That you are a philosopher, a teacher, a man of truth and God. These should be the qualities of a *brahmin*. Then even if a

chamar has got those qualities, he is a *Brahmin*. That is the modern concept of *varnadharma*, that would be Gandhiji's concept also.

FJB: That would be Gandhiji's concept? So it really depends upon each individual person?

SK: The qualities of the person—what are his/her qualities. At that time it came due to occupation. But certain qualities got associated with those occupations. Today *varnadharma* has no meaning. Today if *varnadharma* has any meaning, then we would say that man possessing those qualities should belong to that category.

FJB: Yes I understand.

SK: *Kshatriya* is a warlike person, who is chivalrous and who would protect the country. If a man is brave and he has got all those qualities, he is a *kshatriya*.

FJB: Not because his father was a *kshatriya*?

SK: Not because his father was. Generally people also believe like that. Now all educated people, more or less, believe like that, except a few who are very caste conscious and proud of their own custom. Otherwise we don't believe.

FJB: What kind of society did Gandhi visualize and work for?

SK: A society of workers. There was no place for a drone in his society. Everybody has to work according to his ability. A society where the citizens are fully conscious of their responsibilities and obligations. Only such a society can be a peaceful non-violent society. When the individuals are

sufficiently involved to know their true responsibilities, only then can you bring a good society. Ultimately he was thinking of a self-regulating society, which Vinoba talks of.

FJB: I would like to get a better understanding of what he meant by self-regulating society.

SK: In his concept, the individual had to be worthy. He couldn't think of any society where the individual was nowhere and all the control came from the society, as in the communist or a socialist state, or in any other state, for that matter. It is individuals every time. He loved individuals, and the individuals were not cannon fodder for him, each individual mattered to him. The evolution of each individual mattered to him. He said, 'We cannot have a good society with indifferent individuals, therefore, we have to lay enough emphasis to build up the individual.' And that is why ultimately he came to basic education. You start from the children, and gradually you build up the individual. When individuals are good, individuals have got sense of social responsibility, only then will the society be good. He was thinking of such a society.

FJB: Imagine in India you have not only a million, but you have hundreds of millions of individuals, how is that self-regulated?

How does the whole economy, the whole society function on a self-regulating basis?

SK: I can't think it will function. But I personally feel that was the utopia he was aiming at. It is not possible to achieve that in such a huge society. It can't be self-regulating, unless

each individual is absolutely perfect, which in human affairs never comes about. But he was aiming at the perfection of man also, and when you aim at the perfection you come to a certain level at least, and when you reach to that level if it can't be perfectly self-regulated, it can be somewhat better regulated without too much outside compulsion. Outside regulation does mean some kind of violence. In a perfectly non-violent society, everything will go on automatically. If each one is non-violent, each one will know what to do. But that is the ideal he was aiming at. I don't think it was an achievable ideal, but it was good to keep a high ideal, you can achieve at least half way, or a quarter way.

FJB: In England the idea of a self-regulating economy has been very strong, and is usually put in terms of the unseen hand. Have you ever heard that expression?

SK: No, I don't know that unseen hand.

FJB: What about his attitude towards competition?

SK: As far as children's education is concerned he didn't work it out. Competition in improving one's self, of course, that is very good, but competition in acquiring goods, of course, he would not like because acquisition of goods didn't form a part of his whole concept of society.

FJB: How important is the trusteeship idea?

SK: He was thinking of the self-regulating society and the perfect individual, there the trusteeship also could work.

FJB: You said his basic idea was justice. What puzzles me sometimes is, why should one person have a million and be a trustee for others?

SK: No, there I think I know how his mind was working. He was born in the world where ordinary people had possessions. What to do with these people who already had possessions? Instead of violence, that he had ruled out of life, instead of having a class and overthrowing them, he wanted to convert them, so that they used their possessions for the good of the society, not for the individual. That kind of acquisition would be impossible in a decentralized economy, where each one is working, nobody is under anybody's employee. In that society who will acquire too much wealth?

FJB: There are really two stages?

SK: Yes. That is how I would understand it.

FJB: Gandhi often spoke about health and illness in relation to society. Could you comment on this?

SK: Yes. All imbalance, all injustice would be ill-health in society. In a healthy society everything would be properly balanced. But today what we see is, one man having too much, another having too little, one man living in a hovel and another living in a palace. He would consider that an unhealthy society.

FJB: The idea of balance was very important for Gandhi. Or is it important in Indian culture in general?

SK: All our saints and sages have all along talked of doing justice to the poor and all that. The idea has been there.

FJB: More specifically the idea of balance. When I asked about health, you said there had to be balance. When

it is unbalanced it is unhealthy; is it this the idea of balance?

SK: In a way it is. Our ancient society was more of a rural society. Though one man may be rich, people may be earning, but they were aware that a real man of *dharma* is one who fulfilled his obligations to the society. He had to keep so much of his money for the others for philanthropy. He had to treat his men, people working under him with compassion. There were all sorts of traditional restrictions. In their simple society they did think of some kind of arrangement by which no individual was exploited or oppressed. That was a kind of balance they had brought about.

And, of course, in today's complicated society the balance has to be brought by other means such as by social control, by the government, and so on. Even if the individual is evolved, even then he would, in today's society, would require certain regulations. For instance, let us go back to the trusteeship idea. He did not think that the trustees will, of their own, distribute the things. But, in an independent India, it was possible that the government will lay down regulations as to how much profit he can keep and how much not, and how much he has to give.

FJB: Did Gandhi visualize that?

SK: I am sure he visualized this. He was a man who would change with times, in the sense that he was all the time evolving and progressing. As new things came within his purview, he immediately thought of something. He started this whole constructive work programme with *khadi* and later on went to many activities. But it came gradually

because he was basically a practical worker. As he worked a new problem came before him, and then he added that on. Ultimately, he had *Sarvodaya Samaj*, that the whole society should be developed by all these activities.

FJB: Gandhi emphasized very much the importance of a constructive programme. In which way is it connected with his ideas of society?

SK: How is the individual to become perfect? You have to work for each individual; each individual must be perfect in that perfect society. In order to make the individual perfect, you have to take up each item of this constructive work. Take, for example, Hindu–Muslim unity. We have got these two big communities fighting with each other. We must work on that. We want to evolve one national language for the sake of the unity of the country, so we must work for Hindi. We must give the people one kind of at least a minimum living standard. In order to give that minimum living standard, go to the village and work. See that the person gets more money in his pocket by better agriculture or small industries, that he lives cleanly and that his children get education. All these things are part of the construction work. The uplift of women was part of his constructive work along with several other things.

FJB: Did Gandhiji ever talk to you about a good or ideal society?

SK: Not in those terms. But indirectly he was talking of these things.

FJB: In which way?

SK: Let us say, in a society we can't have exploitation, we must have this basic standard of living, we can't have one person starving and another living in a palace. So you have to go and raise them. And another important point is that while raising them, you have to increase their own initiative and strength, so that they can take care of themselves.

FJB: What was the importance of *khadi*?

SK: In our struggle when we decided to hit the British government, weaken the British government in India by boycotting Manchester goods, then he had to think of something. And he started spinning. It started as a weapon of boycott. But later on *khadi* came to mean many things. I will tell you what it meant to me. I came as a political worker. I joined him as a political worker, we had to go and raise the masses. Even for the fight, we had to get the support of the masses. If we just go and talk to the masses, they may or may not come with us. I can enthuse some of them by eloquent talks, but I can't bring all of them. And just going and talking to them every day is something barren, but if I have got some work with which I can go to them, that is an instrument which lets me approach them. I go to them with *khadi*, with *charkha*, I start spinning classes, I get the cloth woven, I get it sold, I get the money in their pocket, I am doing beneficial work for them, and then I automatically became their leader. And while I am spinning, teaching them spinning and weaving and such things, I am certainly taking good care of their political education.

I am taking good care to see that they improve their social life, they learn to cooperate with each other, they keep their houses and surroundings clean, they think of

educating their children. You see, each item of constructive work was an instrument which helped us to approach the masses and work among them in a better way than mere propaganda. Just bare propaganda among the poor people doesn't last long; it will confine itself on the surface. Gandhiji used to say, 'I have to approach the poor with bread in my hand. I can't go and leave them without anything.' So, *khadi* later on was a very important political instrument in our hands. This enables us to go to the people and organize them. And then along with *khadi* came so many other things.

FJB: How widespread really was *khadi* as you describe it now in Gandhiji's time?

SK: It was all over the country. There were some organizations all over the country, and thousands were working. You see how I look at it. I am just talking in political terms. His political struggle had two wings: one, the constructive, and the other, *satyagraha*—the fight, actual struggle with the British. What was the soldier to do while there was no struggle? He had to be kept together and he could be kept together in this constructive work. To keep these soldiers occupied we had to give them some work, but larger numbers of soldiers joined us during a movement. In the upsurge hundreds and thousands came, but many were not in the constructive work. The number of constructive workers was always less than the numbers who go to prison because many people can't do sustained day-to-day work. But they can come in merely the upsurge and go to jail for six months and come away. Therefore constructive work was spread all over the country. So many institutions

came into being. He institutionalized each item of work. There was the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Spinners Association, the women's section, and so on. And through these institutions thousands of workers worked all over the country. It was spread all over but numerically the constructive workers were less than the people who went to jail.

FJB: I was told by somebody who is in *khadi* now, that in 1945 Gandhiji wanted each worker to go into a village and develop it in his own initiative and in his own way, but this wasn't actually carried through.

SK: Yes, he did want that. He said when freedom came convert the Congress into a society for going and working in the village, because in a free India you will have to do so many things, and the number one task was, in a democracy of this magnitude you have to educate your voters, you have to educate the citizens to learn how to conduct themselves in a democracy with full responsibility. Therefore, he was not merely thinking in terms of transfer of power, he was thinking of changing the entire body of the society, and that could be done only when thousands of us went to the villages and worked. So he said, 'when freedom has come some people will be in Delhi running this machinery at the top, but you all have to go.' But people didn't go, people didn't understand constructive work. In fact lots of politicians still do not understand the political significance of constructive work.

FJB: And why would you say didn't understand the significance?

SK: Because it is painstaking day-to-day work. There are no garlands and no pictures in the press, no hullabaloo, no publicity. You have to be buried in the village and work. Who wants to do it? We don't want to do it, we are city people. We want to have all this fun. You don't know how difficult it is to make our people go to the village. Nobody wants to go there. It was Gandhiji who turned us towards the village, and we went and worked. When I was carrying on this administration in Uttar Pradesh I had 400 hospitals, I mean, medical centres without doctors. And I had doctors but nobody would go and work in the villages, and they were all village units. Each one wanted to practice in the city and have it easy.

FJB: That was in the 1950s?

SK: No, in the 1960s. I was there from 1961 to 1967. And it is so even now. We have plenty of unemployed educated people, but they don't want to go there. Every little village boy who matriculates, who had his school leaving certificate, he wants to come here and do a clerical job, but he doesn't want to stay there.

FJB: For this, is the education system one of the reasons?

SK: Yes. Our educational system. That is why Gandhiji wanted to have basic education, so that the education was closely intertwined with a craft, or with a means by which the boy could later on lead his life.

FJB: You mentioned the *charkha*. Doesn't this also have quite strong symbolic significance? Or would you say that wasn't true?

SK: *Charkha* is a symbol of our self-reliance.

FJB: How did Gandhi's idea of technology develop?

SK: That is why I said he is a modern man. You asked me to give an example. He took up the old fashioned *charkha*, but by the time he left, the *charkha* had evolved, *charkha* was quite different. It was a very smart little instrument with a lot of modern mechanical arrangements in that. So he was not asking us to go back, but he was asking us to take up instruments which are suited for the needs of the country, develop them and make them good. He himself gave a prize of 100,000 rupees for a better *charkha* to one who could evolve. So he was not opposed to mechanical development, nor was he opposed to science. He was only opposed to the concept of centralization. For this country centralization was not good and he wanted decentralization. That is why he said, 'let us develop good instruments, modern and efficient, which people can take and work'.

FJB: If Gandhi had lived long enough to develop the social order in India, completely in conformity with his own ideas, what would he have done?

SK: Our administration would have been from below and not from above. There would have been the least power above, and most of the power below. Self-regulating society can work best if the villagers look after their own needs. Then the government, state government had to come in. They would have come in, we would have been least governed.

FJB: Least governed?

SK: Yes, only those things which are absolutely necessary for the government to take up, he would have wanted the government to take up.

FJB: And would he have made some kind of, say, five-year plans for all those things that are essential?

SK: Five-year plan might have been quite different. Whether he would have made one-year plan or five-year plan, but he certainly would have made some plans for the progress of the country. He would have, certainly. But his whole concept was different. He tried to make each village self-sufficient in their needs and develop those industries which would feed them. He would have kept a few big factories. It is not that he was opposed to it. In his discussion with Louis Fischer he said, 'I am not against power nor am I against big industry. Only in certain spheres we must have it, not in every sphere. In whatever sphere we can decentralize, it should be decentralized, because we have to engage these thousands of hands in work.'

FJB: Which book of Louis Fischer's?

SK: *A Week with Gandhi*.

FJB: Now here is a statement on which I would like you to comment. We talked at the very beginning about *varnadharma*. But here is somebody who says, 'Gandhi extolled *varnadharma* as an ideal of social harmony; a principle rooted in the conception of the four *varnas* as constituting an organic social order.'

SK: How he thought I can't say, but I would think that his *varnadharma* is each one doing his own duty in the society, not interfering in the affairs of others, but each one according to his ability and quality, not by birth.

FJB: Here is another statement I have. I wonder whether you could comment on this. It is by a Western interpreter. It says, 'Gandhi's dietary fads and obsession with hygiene are versions of archaic Indian ideas on the body's metabolism, and projection of the body's wholeness on the holistic social order.'

SK: I don't know. Of course, he was a very clean man. He liked cleanliness and hygiene in every aspect of life, community as well as individual, and he emphasized that. As far as he was concerned, we are a poor country and our people are undernourished. He was experimenting in various forms of things so that one could live cheaply and get better food.

FJB: But do you think it is fair to talk about an obsession in hygiene?

SK: I don't think so. There is no obsession with hygiene. He liked everything clean, naturally. I have told you he was very particular and meticulous. Whatever work had to be done had to be done properly. So in hygiene also he wanted a very high standard.

FJB: That brings me really to the next question about work. It has been said that Gandhiji's attitude towards work was a radical break with traditional attitudes. Do you feel this is true?

SK: As far as work is concerned I think he was influenced by the West, that is punctuality and so on. Traditional, what is that? You see, it is wrong to use the word traditional. India is a huge country, there are sections in India

where people are very hardworking. There are areas where people are lazy. It depends on the climate, or on the situation. If you go to Punjab you see every man works hard. Go to some other places you will see that it is not so. It is not right to say that India is traditionally lazy. Some people are, some people are not.

FJB: In which way was Gandhi concerned with the dignity of work?

SK: Indian educated classes do not work, they look down on any manual work with contempt. It is *infra dig*. I shall give you a very extreme example. I was in Bihar during the earthquake. There the wells had got filled up with sand, and there were villages without any water. One of the jobs we had to do was to go from village to village and get the wells cleaned. Some of the villagers were so poor that they didn't even have a bucket. So we used to keep a store of buckets, rope and other things with us, and give to them. I was living in one small village, and my area was about ten to twelve villages. One day I went to a village where the people were very poor. They didn't have a bucket. So I told a man, 'You come along with me to my hut. I will give you one.' So we walked miles and miles and reached this place. It was about 2 O'clock. I was very tired and wanting to have my food. So I gave that man the bucket and went in to do something for a wash. When I came out he was still standing there. I said, 'Why are you standing there? Do you need something more?'

He said, 'No, but who will carry this bucket?'

I said, 'Why can't you carry it?'

He said, 'I am a teacher, how can I carry?' He was just a school teacher getting eight rupees in those days. But poor man, it was no fault of his. The social thinking was such that an educated man can't carry a bucket.

This is our wretched tradition in this country. Not now, even from earlier times, that hand work is *infra dig* for people, you cannot do it. So Gandhi made us, who went there, to clean the latrine, carry the night soil, every wretched thing we had to do, and with an iron hand he made us do it. Otherwise we are a very spoilt people. And unless we set an example, how do we make others learn? So the top people who came with us had to do everything. Whoever came to him had to do all things. This he did as a lesson to the people.

FJB: Was he interested and concerned about the creativity in work?

SK: Oh yes, all basic education is for that.

FJB: Can you say a little more and explain.

SK: With the exploitation of the British, gradually our crafts and industries had died out. And our traditional crafts and industries too had died. As a result the villagers had got impoverished. The only work in the village left was agriculture and too many people were impinging on the land. Land couldn't maintain them. Therefore, we had to have work in the villages to elevate the village economy. So he was very keen that whatever creative ability the people had, should come out, so that again there is enough work for the people. And he conceived his education with that idea in mind; not only education, take village industries,

khadi, all these things, with the idea that people gradually give work to the people in the villages who are idle. And in every possible way he used to encourage people. Whenever any new thing was invented he would be very happy. Sometimes he even offered prizes for people to do something. And if they improved a technique or found out a new way of doing things, he was most encouraging to these people.

FJB: Now, this giving of prizes brings in a competitive element. Wouldn't you say that?

SK: He didn't mind that. I think he ruled out competition only in amassing wealth. Not in other things. He encouraged little children.

FJB: Gandhiji said that if he had to be reborn he would choose to be a Harijan.

SK: Yes. He said that because his compassion for the lowest in the society was the greatest. He had a sense of guilt that the Hindu society has oppressed the Harijans for centuries and we must do justice to them. He intensely felt it. And it is out of that sentiment that this expression came.

FJB: What does this attitude imply for the kind of society he wanted?

SK: I can't say. But suppose there is competition in good work, what is the harm? Competition by itself is not bad, but competition for selfish purpose is bad. Competition for aggrandizement, for betterment of one's own thing, at the cost of the society, that is bad.

FJB: His ideas on Harijans, and what you said just now, does this imply that he was for a society in which all were equal?

SK: Yes.

FJB: What does equality mean?

SK: Equality means that no man's dignity was to be hurt in any way. That everybody should have enough to eat, enough to live a decent life, enough to educate his children. He should have a decent livelihood, he should be able to earn. He was not for luxuries, but at least the basic minimum needs of the individual should be satisfied, and no man should be hurt or humiliated. All people in the society would be considered as of the same status.

FJB: Gandhiji's attitude towards the Harijans seems to imply that he rejected the traditional view of the meaning of reincarnation. What can you say about this?

SK: I don't know. Because after all he knew *brahmin* can become Harijan, what is there? If you had led a dirty life you become something else. In reincarnation people are supposed to become even animals, what of human beings!

FJB: Yes, but if that is so, why worry about the Harijans? That is not unjust, that is sort of previous bad deeds, bad action. Do you see what I mean?

SK: I see what you say. But there may be a very good Harijan. You see, physical, outward physical living alone is not everything. There may be a very religious Harijan. If you think only in terms of caste, not the quality of the individual, then only this theory will square. A Harijan may

be quite a happy man. Suppose he is born in a sweeper's house, maybe he has a certain amount of poverty, not necessarily he is going hungry, but suppose he has a great sense of *bhakti*, and he is blissful in his union with God, then he has not suffered in this life.

FJB: Well, if he doesn't have enough to eat, and is not allowed to go into the temple?

SK: He will not care that he is not allowed to go to the temples. I can't explain it really, but as you put the question I am thinking. Harijan is such a vast community. Do you know there are any number of Harijans who don't do any dirty work. They do agriculture. Some of the Harijans are not that poor either. The caste system is so funny. There are rich Harijans. There are certain castes which are considered low caste. Suppose they work in leather, or they sell wines and things like that, they are also traditionally Harijans, although some of them are very well-to-do. The caste system came out of, as I say, occupation, certain occupations are considered dirty occupations.

FJB: Let me move on to a different theme. What did Gandhiji mean by *swaraj*?

SK: A simple meaning of *swaraj* is our own *raj*. *Swa* means own, our own *raj*, rule. *Swaraj* does not simply mean the displacement of the British. By *swaraj* he meant a *raj* where, as I have described, people are equal. A classless, casteless society, where there is no exploitation of people, where everybody has an opportunity to develop, and everybody works. It is a workers' society, men and women both work. It may not be a society with luxury but where everybody

has at least enough, the basic minimum needs are satisfied. That is *swaraj* of his conception. If there is any exploitation in the society, if there is too much of discrimination between the rich and the poor, if the gap is very high, then it is not *swaraj* of his concept.

FJB: What about the fulfillment of the person, the growth of the person?

SK: That, of course, is evolution of the man. There should be an opportunity. That is it because man has to grow in his concept.

FJB: How is *swaraj* related to *gram swaraj*?

SK: *Gram swaraj*, he thinks, is self-sufficiency in the village, in the matter of economics.

FJB: How important is this for Gandhiji's own concept?

SK: What was the independent India he was picturing? There the government started from the bottom, the lowest unit, the village. Village people took care of themselves, they regulated themselves, they had their panchayat for justice, they had various industries and they regulated their economic, social and political life. They sent somebody higher up, for the higher units, and as you go higher and higher, less and less responsibilities were left, the top units only regulated the currency, foreign affairs, army and things like that. They have to regulate, but the rest of the work would be done from below.

FJB: Gandhi was concerned with the freedom of all men but he was also concerned with the freedom of the whole man.

SK: Yes, that is a different thing. As I told you he wanted the perfect man. When the man is perfect he is free.

FJB: And what was his, sort of, understanding of the whole man?

SK: Whole man is the man who is so regulated that he has a healthy body, a healthy mind, and opportunities for developing his mind, and more so a spiritual man. A man who is in tune with God, that would be a whole man, a completely evolved man.

FJB: Are these ideas on *swaraj* related to Gandhi's understanding of nature of society, of order in society, or of the economic and political institutions?

SK: Yes, as I said, that is the kind of society that he was aiming at. That society is not possible unless man is evolved. Man has progressed, therefore, this whole thing hangs together. His whole society, his whole concept of life, is one comprehensive whole. Nothing is separate, everything is harmonized, and you can't take off one bit of his work and leave the other; one bit of his programme and leave the other. Everything has to be taken together. And in that the individual counts very much.

FJB: I think you have helped to feel you are a master in politics.

SK: I?

FJB: Yes! What do you think is Gandhi's most important contribution in the field of politics?

SK: Of course, as far as the physical fact is concerned, he got us independence. And his biggest contribution for the world is this weapon of non-violence to be used by the community, weapon of non-violence, not to be used by the individual, but by the community.

FJB: If you put Gandhi in the stream of political thought and political theory in India, in which way does he follow the tradition, in which way does he bring in new thought and ideas?

SK: The idea of non-violence was always with us. Always. Buddha and others had come before him. And it permeates also sufficiently in large sections of the people. But we are, on the whole, not a very political people. Traditionally politics belongs to the top people and the general people mind their own business. They do their agriculture, and other things. For the first time, this non-violent concept was wielded into a political weapon and the weapon was such that it could not be wielded by a single man, it had to be wielded by the masses. The masses who, all along, had lived in the days that had gone. They had always bowed and had allowed the men to come and go. And they had carried on. That has been the tradition of India. As they said, you are like the corn, you bow before the wind, and when the wind goes away you again stand. That has been described as the characteristic of our people. For the first time he said, 'No, you can't bow. You have to come and help.' This was the tremendous thing that he did for us. He involved all of us in politics. And the political instrument was such that it did least harm to us.

FJB: I think this is in line with what you said Gandhi said that 'Politics divorced from religion has absolutely no meaning.'

SK: Yes, naturally. That comes square, because, what is religion? Religion is *dharma*, duty, morals, ethics. Unethical politics has no meaning. If politics is unethical and immoral then it will leave some repercussion in its wake. It will bring some reaction. Means and ends should be proper, meaning ethical means, moral means. If you don't use moral means then you will have bad reaction afterwards. You will leave some trail behind.

FJB: When Gandhi speaks about means and ends he related them very closely to each other, didn't he?

SK: Yes. If your means are inferior, your end will be bad.

FJB: But the whole conception of the relationship of means and ends seems to me not to be a linear one. It seems to me more of a circular one, is that true?

SK: Yes, as I said, he was a very comprehensive person. His whole life was integrated. There never were any loose strands in his thinking or in his living.

FJB: What political order did Gandhi feel would be the best one?

SK: Well, I have explained that. There is no name for it, he never used the word socialism, but his whole concept was socialistic, but not the socialism where a politburo was controlling us, but a socialism where people are, to a great extent, self-regulated, and where there is the least administration.

FJB: Gandhiji spoke about, circles and overlapping circles when talking about community and society. Can you comment on that?

SK: As I told you, the least unit, the lowest unit, the basic unit is the village. In the village people should regulate their economic, social, political, and judicial life; even if there are cases they should try to settle it among themselves. Then, over the village would be a group of villages or a district, then over that will be the state, over that will be the centre. It will rise in this ascending order. Where your basic needs are managed at the basic level, where there are things beyond your ability that goes to the higher level, then they look after you, that is the overlapping circles.

FJB: Would you say that the idea of the circles is related to the idea of different levels?

SK: Yes, I should think so. Maybe a few at the same level, interchange also of goods and things helping each other.

FJB: Do you feel that Gandhi's idea of *ashram* differed from the traditional ideas of *ashram*?

SK: Well, his *ashram* was a community living. Traditional ideas of *ashrams* are for religious pursuits and other things, mostly. Here his *ashram* has so many families living together, sharing with each other whatever they have and whatever work there is. I think his *ashram* is more like the *ashrams* I have seen in Israel.

FJB: Have you been to Israel?

SK: Yes, I have been there. People living and working together for their common goods.

FJB: Is there a connection between these?

SK: No, their ideas are quite different. But what I am saying is that as far as object is concerned they were living together, sharing the work as well as their income together.

FJB: I think you have answered most of the questions. But I would like to ask you one. Some people said that Gandhiji combined in himself the masculine and the feminine in a new way.

SK: Rajkumari has spoken about it. She has written about it. You read one article of mine in the centenary volume of Gandhiji, I have written on Gandhi and women. Bapu was very soft-hearted in a way. He was hard also. But he could be very soft like a mother, and you could confide in him. Whatever you felt you could go and talk to him. He was most sympathetic and very sensitive. There was a great deal of sensitiveness in him, lot of compassion and love, which we associate more with women. So he was, Rajkumari says he was, like a mother and father, and I feel his contribution in bringing us out is tremendous. People don't yet realize.

FJB: Could you say a little more about the blending? He could be very firm, strong. I don't think firm, strong, is a masculine quality.

SK: Maybe yes, you are right. Women can be very firm, yes.

FJB: Let me put it this way. I am thinking about a situation in Noakhali where Manuben forgot something. Do you remember that?

SK: No, I don't.

FJB: He scolded. He said, 'you go back, and then you are on your own'.

SK: In those things he could be very firm.

FJB: Very firm. And she was scared, couldn't somebody come with her? And there seemed to be some danger.

SK: No, he could be very, very firm like that. In fact when he was sending Abha Gandhi, his grand nephew's wife, she was with him. He decided to send her to a village to work alone. I had my own centres. I was in Noakhali but I was not in his camp all the time. I was not with him all the time. I was looking after about 20 centres and I used to go about and meet him once in a while. So I heard that he is sending Abha to a particular village to work and that was a notorious village where a lot of bad things had been done, so I rushed up to him. I said, 'Don't send Abha. It is a dangerous place, this has happened,' because I was already in that place and I was more acquainted with the area. He said, 'No, she will go, nobody will do a thing to her, she has to go.' So he sent her alone and she did the work and came back.

FJB: And nobody did anything?

SK: Nothing happened.

FJB: Now, this is very profound.

SK: He had very great confidence in our ability—in women's ability. We may not have the confidence, but he had that confidence. He thought that he could see the inner strength in us. He again and again said a woman would recognize that she is not the weaker sex.

FJB: But what about this blending? On the other hand Manuben speaks about him as her mother?

SK: He was very kind. He would look after the food of everybody; he would look after the health of everybody. If anything went wrong with you he was there to see to it. He was a perfect host, he was perfect in the care of his guests, he would see that everything that you need is there. These were his womanly qualities. Anybody in distress, he was more than kind. These are his womanly qualities. And manly qualities are the other things, managing affairs, being strict, discipline, very strict discipline indeed.

FJB: How did this blend really, this strict disciplinarian, and the warmth?

SK: I can't say. Because he loved everybody, his strictness came not out of cruelty or anger, but out of his desire to teach the person, as a teacher. If I have done wrong suppose Manuben had done wrong, she had to learn a lesson.

FJB: What is this element of saying I know nothing will happen to her?

SK: That I don't know, he had tremendous confidence. He thought that they have got the inner strength and that latent strength would come out in a challenge. Just as you teach a child to swim. You throw the child in the water and the child learns to swim. In the same way he threw us in the turmoil of work and saw that we managed to keep afloat.

FJB: When he encouraged women to come out, to take important assignments, did this mean that they continued their traditional family connections, relationships?

SK: Yes, he never asked us to leave the family, except special people. Otherwise people maintained their families and looked after them. What he wanted was that we should be simple, we shouldn't wear ornaments and we shouldn't be vain, and so on.

FJB: When you look at all the things we talk about, do you feel that Gandhiji made too great demands on people?

SK: Sometimes he did. You see, it acted in this way. Some people were able to meet the demands and, in the challenge, they developed. Some people went under. Some could not manage, they left him.

FJB: Is there any indication you could give, of the number of those?

SK: I can't say. He met hundreds of people. People came to him with every little thing, 'Bapu, my little finger is aching', 'Bapu, my child is ill', he was very fond of listening to all these personal things.

FJB: Did he feel that everybody could discipline himself or herself as much as he did?

SK: No, it was very difficult. People tried, some people failed, some people were unhappy, some people succeeded.

FJB: Did he help them to do this?

SK: He was very much fond of getting people's confidence, he would talk to them, explain to them and encourage them. He had endless patience in such cases. He would call and talk to them and if he felt that a person can't, then

he would say, 'All right, go back to your normal life, don't come here.'

FJB: What about his asceticism?

SK: He thought he was all the time struggling to become a perfect ascetic and he was not. And he thought he was far from perfection because even in his thought she was not ascetic. 'I am not fully ascetic. I have to control my thoughts also.'

FJB: Were you ever with him while he fasted?

SK: No, I don't think so. I wasn't with him.

FJB: Can you say something about the impact of his fasting on people?

SK: Oh yes, that was tremendous; people were very, very deeply moved whenever he fasted. That was a real sanction behind his fasts. People were absolutely disturbed. I remember when I was underground in 1942 when he fasted in Aga Khan's Palace. I will tell you my own experience, then you will understand. I was underground, I was wanted by the police and I was avoiding them. Gandhiji fasted, then his condition, at one time, became very critical and we were, of course, so very disturbed. Then I said, 'Whatever happens I must see him, even if the police arrest me it doesn't matter.'

I went and saw the Home Secretary, Bombay. I just walked into his Secretariat. I was not very much known to the police. They knew my name but my face was not known to them. I just walked into his room in the

Secretariat. I was going about in false name in those days. But after I entered his room I told him 'I am Mrs Kripalani, and I want to see Gandhiji now at this palace. And you must allow me to go and see him, you can arrest me when I am on my way out, this much you have to do for me.' So the poor man was put in a great fix, because he was the Home Secretary and he had to arrest me. At that time I had been doing underground work. I had warrants issued in almost all the states against me. Later on I learnt how he did it. He said. 'All right you go and see him, and leave Poona the very day, don't stay there.' He rang up the Governor it seems, and had a talk with him and the Governor said, 'Yes, let her. Don't arrest her for twenty-four hours.' So I went and saw Gandhiji and came out. I didn't get arrested then. I left Poona immediately and went somewhere else. I got arrested a few months later. But Gandhiji meant so much for us. I had been avoiding the police all these days but I went in and said, 'It is all right, take me, but let me see him.' He meant so much to each one of us.

FJB: Can you say a little bit on what happened when you saw him?

SK: I was one of the key underground workers. We had done all this, sabotage and other things. People had done and we had just given them money. At that time there was a lot of controversy going on among his people who had got arrested on the very first day. So they didn't participate in all these things. We who had been left behind, we had done those things and we were being blamed very much and I was very unhappy also. So I thought if I went there Bapu may ask me something. He knew I was underground.

He asked me, 'How did you come?' A lot of people were coming, many people visited him. There was not much time to talk, he was just lying down. We would just talk one or two words and come away. He said, 'How did you come?' I said I just came like that. Then he asked one or two questions about what we were doing. But he didn't tell me even one word that we had indulged in violence, and so on. He didn't say anything, we came away. You could see him just for a minute. He was too weak, we couldn't talk to him.

FJB: He was too weak to talk?

SK: He was just very feeble, he was talking. His condition became at one time very grave, then he improved.

FJB: Was he thin?

SK: Oh, yes, he used to get very thin, very weak.

FJB: What was it that brought people to him? I don't mean just going to him, I mean the feelings.

SK: For one thing he was respected as the Mahatma, as a great man, as a very great religious man and a good man. I wouldn't say religious, as a good man. And not only respect, but very great love. And those who came personally in touch with him, each one thought he is my own, my very own. If they called him Bapu they thought of him also as Bapu. His love was very great, it sort of encompassed you. He was a man of great love. There is his real Christian teaching.

FJB: Some people say fasting may be coercive.

SK: It is, in a way, coercive. Coercive in the sense that if you don't do on your own, you have done it because he has fasted. And your love for him is so great that you have been compelled to do this. Maybe against your own wishes. Suppose I think this is wrong and I should not do it let's take the British government. They thought they don't want to do it, but because he fasted, they did it. If he fasted, his death might have convulsed the whole country. So out of fear they did certain things. That in a way is compulsion.

FJB: What about the people who loved him, was there a coercive element there?

SK: Sometimes in private relations he did it. Suppose somebody did something wrong, instead of punishing that person, he would say I am going to fast in atonement, and that poor person was absolutely finished.

FJB: Why?

SK: Because suppose I have done wrong, and instead of punishing me he said, I am punishing myself, then the person who has committed the offence, and he loves him, then his remorse is tremendous, that on my account he is doing this.

FJB: And this actually happened?

SK: Oh, so many times it happened. In the *ashram*—I never lived in the *ashram*—in their personal relations these things used to happen quite often.

FJB: And people were full of remorse?

SK: Naturally, people were full of remorse and very unhappy.

FJB: But did it help them?

SK: They would certainly, next time, behave themselves; they wouldn't do that thing again.

FJB: Now this question of fasting leads to the deeper question of the meaning of suffering. I mean what you just said, he suffered for others, didn't he?

SK: Yes, he had that element of suffering for others. Atoning, I would rather say, in atonement. He took the suffering of others that had an element of Christian thinking.

FJB: Why you say Christian?

SK: Jesus suffered for all others, he even took the cross for others. In the same way Gandhi also used to do. I will give you one example. When he went to Noakhali he started walking bare feet—his whole itinerary was walking bare feet—and his feet were injured with little blisters and all. So I went and told him, 'Bapu is it so necessary for you to walk bare feet, can't you wear *chappals*?' He just said, 'This is right for me here.' Then I understood that he was walking as if with sack-cloth and ashes. He was atoning for the violence that the people there had indulged in. Whether it was a Hindu or a Muslim, if they indulged in violence, if they transgressed certain human laws they were his children, he suffered for them. I was deeply touched by what he said that day, and I understood with what spirit he had come to Noakhali.

FJB: Why do you say this is Christian, this is not also in Hinduism?

SK: It is, it is, but it is a very glaring example. I mean, Christ on the Cross, is a very tremendous example for the whole world.

FJB: Was that important for Gandhi, Christ on the cross?

SK: Yes, I think so, of course. Yes, it was. He was very greatly influenced by Christianity, by Christian way of thinking. I mean, not Church Christianity, but the real preaching of Jesus.

FJB: It is sometimes said that for Gandhi, self-control was more important than self-realization. Could you comment on that?

SK: No, I am sorry. I don't think I can say anything on that. I don't know.

FJB: Can you say a little bit about the Gandhian movement after Gandhi's death? What happened? What I am really interested in is what happened after Gandhi's death, why is India today not a Gandhian country?

SK: Well, my only answer is that we didn't understand Gandhi. Very few people understood. Intellectually understanding is one thing. Understanding him here, realizing him and assimilating him is another. Many people may have intellectually understood Gandhi, but they have not adopted Gandhiji's ideas in their lives. It doesn't mean a thing to them. That is why they have gone wrong.

FJB: Why doesn't it mean?

SK: Well, prophets come, they are not understood in their time, their teachings have impact later on and in other

times. Buddha preached here, but Buddhism went to Japan and China, not India. It happens.

FJB: But what is it in Gandhi's teaching that is difficult to understand? I mean understanding not in an intellectual sense.

SK: Well, it is truth and sacrifice. We are so full of hypocrisy and humbug that the absolute truth of Gandhiji is something which is very difficult for the people to follow. And nobody is ready to sacrifice, everybody is greedy. They want to make money, they want to have a good time, they don't care for their neighbour. That is the general atmosphere. After Gandhiji died, Nehru, the leader, didn't project anything Gandhian before us. He projected the Western civilization and the Western material advance, and naturally, in fact, for a while there was a little derision of Gandhiji, even among the leaders.

FJB: Among leaders?

SK: Even Nehru. Old fashioned things! That kind of thinking.

FJB: But Nehru was trusted.

SK: He loved Nehru. But my own reading of Nehru is that he didn't understand Gandhi.

FJB: But Gandhi loved Nehru.

SK: Gandhi loved, naturally. He was love, love for everybody.

FJB: Well. How deeply do you feel Gandhi really penetrated into this consciousness of India?

SK: I think Gandhi symbolizes India. Gandhi understood India. Gandhi is real, grown from Indian soil. Nehru and others, they are not real grown, they are grafted from outside, their whole mental makeup is different. Gandhi understood the problems of India, he knew the people of India, he loved them, and he tried to find real solutions for them.

FJB: Yes, how far would you say that his truth and sacrifice, penetrate?

SK: It has not penetrated much. A time may come when we look in, then we may find that it is there but at the time it is sort of covered with the veneer of other things. Nobody wants to look in.

FJB: And what about the people who actually participated in *satyagraha* campaigns?

SK: Many of them are tired, many of them are diverted, too much involved in politics. Many of them have lost faith because they have become greedy. Gandhiji was a great disciplinarian and if we went wrong he kept us straight also. When he was there we think we cannot just do what we like. And all these restraints are gone. I am sorry to say this but it is true.

FJB: That would mean that Gandhi had to be there in person to make his power.

SK: Yes. I think he should have been with us for another 25 years to keep us straight.

FJB: So in a way people were not able to carry on, on their own, is that correct?

SK: Yes. That is true. There are some people who intellectually are making some investigations and research in various subjects. There is an attempt at intellectual understanding of Gandhi. But translating Gandhiji's ideas into life, nobody is doing. Maybe very few, here and there. Maybe Vinoba, he is also doing his own thing, it is not Gandhiji's thing.

FJB: Do you feel this was generally true?

SK: This was generally true, and I told you the reason also. In political work it was like drinking heady wine and emotion and upsurge. You go to jail and people garland you when you come back. Your picture is printed in the paper, your name is there, there are a lot of attractive things. There was suffering also involved, but you were carried away on the wave of emotion. But for constructive work you have to go to a remote village, sit there and work, nobody bothers to ask you what you are doing, lead a hard life there. And many people were not enthused about day-to-day continuous work. But there were a lot of people enthused also, who saw the vision in that and they got inspired and went and worked.

FJB: But you see, when we look, that's not only from what you say—that Gandhi did not penetrate India as a whole and its people—but the Gandhian movement itself, do you feel that it is really carrying on Gandhi's basic ideas?

SK: They are trying. But there is this difference. Gandhiji never asked us to do anything which he himself was not prepared to do. He not only taught us, but set an example. Now the Gandhians want to teach, there are very few.

There are some people who want to set an example also, but there are very few. They are too small for this vast country. The example of his life and his teaching both moved us and brought us to him, but now the example of the life is missing there.

FJB: When I talked to your husband he mentioned that Gandhians don't want to go into politics.

SK: At one time they said they didn't want to go into politics. It is the constructive workers, many of them continued to do the work. They didn't come to the movement. Some did, but all of them did not, because they were involved in their own institutions and the institutions became big for them. But Gandhiji never thought in those terms. He said during a movement, through an institution all of you, pour yourself into the movement. But later on what happened? The constructive workers were all too much enamoured of their own institutions and their work, that they did not want to get involved in politics. They kept themselves aloof. But as I said, for Gandhiji, life is all one whole. Constructive work is also political work. Political work is also work for the improvement of the people. They are not different or separate compartments. These people did not understand Gandhiji's teachings.

I think there were two reasons why they did not want to get involved. One was, they were rather purists. They said, if we go and get involved, we will have to make compromises. Second, some of them wanted to avoid getting into conflict with the government, because government was certainly not following Gandhiji's ideas. They had given them up as soon as they came to power and the people

who struggled against them like my husband, ultimately became isolated.

FJB: He fought against the government?

SK: Yes, he was criticizing them throughout. He was one Gandhian who, throughout, fought from the political platform against the government. He is the one solitary individual who has done this work.

FJB: I know much more about Gandhi now than when I started this work.

SK: He was a very fascinating man to know, really, a very interesting man.

Glossary

<i>Acharya</i>	Learned commentator, teacher, philosopher
<i>Advait</i>	Non-duality, monism
<i>Agraha</i>	Insistence
<i>Ahamkar</i>	Ego
<i>Ahamgrasta</i>	Ego-stricken
<i>Ahimsa</i>	Non-violence, non-injury, abstention from hostile thought, word or act
<i>Ahimsak</i>	One who practises <i>ahimsa</i>
<i>Ammajan</i>	Mother
<i>Anekavdhan</i>	Simultaneous multi-tasking ability
<i>Ardhanarishwar</i>	A form of Shiva that is half-male and half-female
<i>Asahakar</i>	Non-cooperation
<i>Ashram</i>	A community united by spiritual goals, commune of spiritual aspirants centred on the person of a guru

<i>Atman/Atma</i>	Soul, spirit
<i>Atmasamarpana</i>	Self-surrender
<i>Avidya</i>	Ignorance
Ba	Mother (also Kasturba, Gandhi's wife)
<i>Babajan</i>	Father
<i>Bahen</i>	Sister
<i>Baniya</i>	Trader, merchant
Bapu	Father (also a respectful name for Gandhi)
<i>Bhajan</i>	Devotional song
<i>Bhakti</i>	Devotion
Bharat	India
<i>Bharatiya</i>	Indian
<i>Bhoodan</i>	Movement started by Vinoba Bhave inspiring people to donate their land to be distributed among the landless and poor
<i>Bindu</i>	Dot
<i>Brahmacharya</i>	Celibacy
<i>Brahmachari</i>	One who practises celibacy
<i>Brahmin</i>	The highest of the four castes in the caste hierarchy; popularly known as the priestly class
<i>Bua</i>	Father's sister
<i>Chamar</i>	Cobbler, a low caste
<i>Charkha</i>	Spinning wheel
<i>Chakra</i>	Wheel, circle
Chappals	Slippers
<i>Charpai</i>	Cot

Crore	Ten million
<i>Dadagiri</i>	Bullying, using unjust force
<i>Darzi</i>	Tailor
<i>Dasbhava</i>	Attitude of service
<i>Dharma</i>	Duty, moral law, righteousness
<i>Dharmayuddha</i>	War for righteousness
Fakir	Hermit, recluse
<i>Gaushala</i>	Cow-shed
Gerua	Terracotta colour implying renunciation of worldly matters
<i>Gherao</i>	A way of protest in India in which workers/persons surround the employer/politician until their demands are met
<i>Gita</i>	Philosophical and theological discourse given by Krishna to Arjun before an impending war in the epic <i>Mahabharata</i>
<i>Goonda</i>	Ruffian, rascal
<i>Gram udyog</i>	Village industries
<i>Gram swaraj</i>	Village self-rule/republic
<i>Gur</i>	Jaggery
<i>Hamal</i>	Porter
Harijan	Literally, 'people of god'. Term used by Gandhi for the former untouchables
Hazrat	Eminent person, religious leader
Hindi	National language of India
<i>Huzoor</i>	Honorific title of respect
<i>Ishk</i>	Love

Jain	Follower of Jain religion
Ji	Respectful suffix
<i>Jihad</i>	Crusade
<i>Kapadia</i>	Cloth sellers
<i>Karma</i>	Law of ethical causation and moral retribution, action
<i>Khadi</i>	Hand-spun cloth
<i>Khadiwallas</i>	Persons using <i>khadi</i>
Kathiawad	Saurashtra, a region in the present Gujarat
Kathiawadi	A person hailing from Kathiawad
<i>Kauravas</i>	One hundred princes, sons of the Kuru king Dhritarashtra in the epic <i>Mahabharata</i>
<i>Kosha</i>	Cell
Krishna	Incarnation of Lord Vishnu, narrator of <i>Gita</i> in the epic <i>Mahabharata</i>
<i>Kshatriya</i>	Warrior caste, second in the caste hierarchy
<i>Kumkum</i>	Vermillion
Lakh	Hundred thousand
<i>Lok</i>	People
<i>Lok sevak</i>	Servant of the people
<i>Maha yogi</i>	Great <i>yogi</i>
<i>Mahabharata</i>	An ancient Indian epic ascribed to the sage Vyas
Mahatma	Great soul, an honorific title conferred on Gandhi by Rabindranath Tagore
<i>Maharshi</i>	Great sage

<i>Mahila</i>	Woman
<i>Mantra</i>	Recitation of a hymn, religious chant, counsel, message
<i>Maulvi</i>	Muslim well-versed in religious matters and texts
<i>Maya</i>	Deceptive appearance, illusion
<i>Moksha</i>	Total liberation
<i>Muni</i>	Sage, holy man
<i>Namaz</i>	Muslim prayer
<i>Nawab</i>	Elite from the Muslim ruling class
<i>Nayi talim</i>	Basic education propounded by Gandhi
<i>Nirvana</i>	Salvation
<i>Panchayat</i>	Village council elected by the people
<i>Pandavas</i>	Five princes, sons of the Kuru King Pandu, in the epic <i>Mahabharata</i>
<i>Parmatma</i>	God, literally the highest soul
<i>Prakruti</i>	Nature
<i>Prana</i>	Breath vital for life
<i>Pranam</i>	Salutation
<i>Puja</i>	Worship
<i>Purdah</i>	Veil
<i>Purusha</i>	Man
<i>Premavtar</i>	Embodiment of love
<i>Prembhakti</i>	Devotional love
<i>Premsakshat</i>	Love incarnate
<i>Raja</i>	The King
<i>Ramayana</i>	An ancient Indian epic ascribed to the sage Valmiki

<i>Rani</i>	Queen
<i>Rishi</i>	Sage, seer
<i>Roza</i>	Religious fast observed by the Muslims
<i>Sadhana</i>	Discipline for attainment of emancipation
<i>Sadhau</i>	Saintly person, ascetic
<i>Sanyasi</i>	Monk, man who has renounced the worldly ties
<i>Samadhi</i>	Deep meditation in which the meditator loses his/her identity and becomes one with the Supreme Being
<i>Satya</i>	Truth
<i>Satyagraha</i>	Non-violent resistance
<i>Satyagrahi</i>	One who practices <i>satyagraha</i>
<i>Samaj</i>	Society, association
<i>Sangha</i>	Organization
<i>Sarvodaya</i>	Good or welfare of all, uplift of all the sections of the society
<i>Sarvadharmasamabhava</i>	Outlook of equality to all religions
<i>Seva</i>	Service
<i>Sharanbhava</i>	Attitude of surrender
<i>Shibir</i>	Camp
<i>Shudra</i>	The lowest caste
<i>Sparshbhavana</i>	Concept of touchability/untouchability
<i>Suhag</i>	Sign of happiness of the wife whose husband is alive
<i>Svavalamban</i>	Self-reliance

<i>Swaraj</i>	Self-rule, political and cultural independence
<i>Swadeshi</i>	Product made in one's own country
<i>Swadharma</i>	One's righteous obligation
<i>Taluka</i>	A small unit made of villages
<i>Tapasya</i>	Penance
<i>Tonga</i>	Horse-carriage
Upanishad	Sacred texts written at the close of the Vedic period
<i>Vaishnav</i>	One who worships Lord Vishnu, a righteous compassionate man according to Gandhi
<i>Varna</i>	The traditional caste functionally distinct class of people
<i>Varna system</i>	Conceptually the ancient system of functional division of Indian society into four distinct classes which later perverted to caste system
<i>Varnadharma</i>	The duties and relationships of the four castes; each has a specific duty
<i>Varnashramdharma</i>	Duties relevant to the four stages of life and the four castes
<i>Veda</i>	Earliest Hindu scriptures, literally knowledge
<i>Vedant</i>	The end part of the <i>Vedas</i>
<i>Veena</i>	An Indian musical string instrument similar to lute.
Vidyapith	University

<i>Yagna</i>	Sacrifice, sacred religious ritual of the Hindus
<i>Yantrabhava</i>	Attitude of being God's instrument
<i>Yoga</i>	Spiritual discipline, union with the divine
<i>Yogi</i>	Ascetic, one who practices <i>yoga</i>
<i>Yogini</i>	Female of <i>yogi</i>
<i>Zamindar</i>	Landlord

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Index

- absolute evil, 474
- absolute good, 474
- absolute truth, 94, 330, 369, 370
- acquisitive society, 140
- Aga Khan Palace, 310
- agriculture, Gandhi's ignoring of, 361
- ahamkara*, 225–26
- ahimsa*, 20, 75, 178, 181
 - disagreement to, 176
 - Gandhi's definition of, 63
- AICC office, working in, 440
- Ali, Mrs Aruna Asaf, 443
- All India Village Industries Association, 355
- Ambedkar, 374
- Ameena, 155
- analytical aptitude, development of, 80
- Anandmai, Sri Ma, 231–32
- Androphiles and the Lion*, 261
- ashram*,
 - training in, 194–97, 240
 - Gandhi's idea of, 507
 - inmates' responsibilities in, 63
 - significance of, 46, 297, 402
- atman*, 98, 100, 338, 378, 470
- Aurobindo, 473
- Bajaj, Jamnalal, 187, 250, 435
- balance, idea of, 489
- Bapa, Thakkar, 447
- Barker, Ernest, 4
- basic education, 360, 494
- bhakti*, 83–84
- Bhoodan* movement, 143–44, 405
- Bihar earthquake, 498
- Blum, Fred J., 7, 53–58
 - action research, 55
 - association with Gandhians, 56
 - interest in Gandhi, 56
 - interviews on Gandhi, 16
 - research in village industries, 57
 - return to Europe, 56
 - stay in India, 57
- Bose,
 - Nirmal Kumar, on *satyagraha*, 35
 - Sarat, 422–23

- brahmacharya*, 20, 37–39, 242, 273–74, 333, 375, 438, 439, 479
 - importance of, in Gandhi's life, 87
 - Raihana Tyabji's disagreement to, 175
- brahmin*, 484
- Brahmosamaj, caste concept in, 471–72
- British Gandhi Foundation
 - Summer School, 58
- Buber, Martin, 35
- bureaucracy, as dominant factor, 129
- capitalism, 123, 125, 129
- caste, 254
- celibacy, 291
- Certificate of Gramseva Dikshit, 351
- Champaran,
 - Gandhi in, 64–66, 331
 - indigo plantations in, 64–65
- charkha*, 122, 495
- Chauri Chaura incident, 69
- Christ consciousness, 230
- Christianity,
 - Gandhi's attitude towards, 385
 - history of, 143
 - non-violence in, 258
- Churchill, Winston, 4
- class conflicts, measures to end, 360
- Colours, importance of, 201
- communal violence, 317
- compassion, for the lowest in the society, 500
- competition, 117, 389, 487
- concentric circle, concept of, 119–20, 348, 507
- consciousness, 105, 239–41
- constructive work, 46–47, 70, 71, 120, 141, 144, 250, 289, 333, 390–91
 - aversion towards, 403, 493
 - kinds of, 457
 - political significance of, 493, 521
- conversion, unnecessary of, 284
- cooperation, 118
- corruption and injustice, protests against, 26
- cosmic harmony, experiment on, 262
- cultural background, importance of, 341
- Damayantibai, 243
- dasbhava yantrabhava*, 226
- day of judgement, 147
- decentralization, 406
- democracy, 131
- democratic constitution, 133
- dharma*, 133–34, 283, 340, 347
 - Gandhi on, 45
 - meaning of, 380–81, 476
- Dharmadhikari, Dada, 8, 9, 10, 12, 26, 243–300
 - differences with Gandhi, 18–19
 - first meeting with Gandhi, 248, 253
 - life and works of, 243–46
 - on *brahmacharya*, 38
 - on fasts, 34
 - on Gandhi's relations with women, 40

- on masculine and feminine in Gandhi, 41
- on *satyagraha*, 36
- dialectic, 186
- diet experiments, 365
- discipline, 272, 335
- divide and rule policy, 121, 138
- East and West, sense of opposites in, 282
- East India Company, 73
- economy and society, Gandhi's idea on, 128
- education,
 - evolution of, by Gandhi, 457
 - scientific system of, 142
 - through work, 452
- educational institutions, boycott of, 248
- educational reforms, need for, 426–28
- embarrassing the government, 443
- equality, meaning of, 501
- Erikson, Erik H., 260
- ethics and politics, 13
- face-to-face society, 287
- fasting *satyagraha* in Patan, 202, 206–09
- fasting, 374
 - as coercive, 110, 372, 515
 - effects of, 315–16
 - experience during, 315
 - for Hindu–Muslim unity, 373
 - for self-purification, 327
 - impact on people, 512
 - importance of, 108, 269, 328
 - influence of, 108
 - opposition to, 256
 - role of, in Gandhi's life, 372
- fear, overcoming of, 377
- Fischer, Louis, 28
- five-year plan 496
- forced family planning, 322
- foreign cloths, burning of, 212
- Gandhi Interview Project, 57
- Gandhi Seva Sangh, 251
- Gandhi,
 - Abha, 509
 - adherence of, to truth and non-violence, 322
 - and Christianity, 95, 476
 - and Gokhale, ideas of, 132, 133
 - and Jawaharlal Nehru,
 - differences between, 200
 - and Koran, 477
 - and non-violence, 75, 77
 - and Patel 14
 - and rural–urban relationship, 392
 - as a good teacher, 431
 - as a human being, 260, 463
 - as a strict disciplinarian, 193–94
 - as an ascetic, 110–11, 512
 - attempt to change human relationships, 294
 - attitude towards
 - economic questions, 30
 - Harijans, 398
 - women, 111, 291, 293, 394, 395, 483, 484, 509, 510
 - work, 296, 497–98
 - bias towards *khadi*, 399
 - building up of people by, 464
 - changes over, 259–60
 - changes wanted by, 300

Gandhi (*Continued*)

characteristic of, 86
 children of, 192–93
 compassion of, 432
 concentration on the
 Bharatiya people, 200
 concept of, on work, 46
 Congress activities of, 296,
 399
 contribution of, 345, 352
 contribution in the political
 field, 13, 131, 295, 344,
 398, 505
 criticism over a Hindu–
 Muslim marriage, 166
 cruel decisions by, 397
 death of, 1, 318, 450–51
 demands on people, 511
 Devadas, 193
 development of *satyagraha*
 by, 368
 differing from tradition, 291
 discipline of, 371, 432
 discourses on ideas of, 3
 discussions with, 279
 double programme, 70
 erosion of influence, 182
 experience with, 320
 experiments with women, 37,
 88–89, 375, 376
 exploitation of name of, 321
 extreme demands by, 479
 fasts by, 33, 316
 feeling as half woman, 344
 feelings on caste, 397
 female qualities of, 113
 feminine and masculine in, 396
 first impression on, 429
 followers of, 185
 for decentralization of
 economy, 464–65

Hiralal, 192–93
 human touch of, 13
 idealism of, 17
 ideas on
 celibacy and marriage, 41,
 395
 diet, 365
 peace and non-violence, 1
 religion, 394
 social and economic
 conditions of India,
 393
 society and social order,
 116, 117, 286
 impact of life and ideas on
 people, 26
 importance of martyrdom
 of, 94
 individual's role according
 to, 17
 influence of, 104, 213–14,
 453
 influences on, 82, 257, 342,
 364, 467, 469
 Jain faith of, 466
 leadership of, 104
 masculine and feminine in,
 41, 113, 292, 508
 meeting for the first time, 14
 Mrs Indira, functioning of,
 312
 nature of, 30
 non-violent campaign of,
 367
 obsession in hygiene, 497
 old-fashioned ideas of,
 253–54
 on caste system, 30, 47, 114
 on *dharma*, 44
 on earthquake in Bihar, 434
 on ethics in politics, 506

- on heavy industry, 496
- on life 10, 50
- on non-violence, 44
- on planning, 400
- on social order and society, 386–88, 392, 482
- on *swaraj*, 44
- on technology, 47, 495
- on trusteeship, 44
- opposition to the Kripalani–Sucheta marriage, 61
- outlook on life, 268
- overcoming of fear by, 276
- penetration into the
 - consciousness of India, 139, 334, 403, 519
- perception of close associates of, 9, 12
- personal services to, 429–30
- political order of, 295, 346, 398, 400, 506
- presence of violence in, 33
- psychological makeup of, 91
- punctuality of, 232
- qualities of, 255, 322, 362
- refusal to take up agriculture problem, 399
- relations with women, 39, 331
- routine in sevagram, 163
- sense of humour of, 259, 329
- social order of, 347–49
- society visualized by, 485
- sons of, 452–53
- spontaneous rapport of, with people, 16
- tackling of problems by, 82
- taking care of the sick by, 432–33
- teachings to associates, 48
- thoughts of, 3, 78
- translating ideas into life, 520–21
- treatment of his followers, 161
- urge for self-purification, 45
- violence in, 364
- vision of future, 42–49
- visit to Muslim refugees in Purana Quila, 323–24
- workability of approach of, 458
- world view of, 394
- writings of Indian scholars on, 28–29
- yogic consciousness of, 232
- Gandhi, My Father*, 1
- Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, 62
- Gandhi: The Statesman*, 62
- Gandhi's dietetics, disagreement to, 261
- Gandhi's Truth*, 260
- Gandhian and communist trusteeships, difference between, 389
- Gandhian methods, ignorance of, 369
- Gandhian movement after Gandhi's death, 25, 299, 403, 517–18
- Gandhian philosophy, 18
- Gandhian studies, courses in, 1
- Gandhigiri*, 27
- Gandhi–Irwin Pact, 72
- Gandhism, 346, 455–56
- Gita*, 80, 83, 84, 95, 280, 380
- God is Truth, 93, 382–83
- Gokhale, ideas of, 133
- good and evil, non-difference between, 236, 282
- gram swaraj*, 121, 399, 503
- Gramodyog Sangha, 351

- Gramseva Vidyalaya at Wardha, 351
- Gujarat Vidyapith, 304
- habits and law, 92
- Harijan, 406, 501, 502
- Hazare, Anna, 26
- healthy society, 119
- Heart of a Gopi*, 156
- Hindu *dharma*, 20, 188–90, 192
- Hindu philosophy, 83
- Hindu way of thinking, 459, 480
- Hinduism, 383, 467
- Hindu–Muslim relationship in Noakhali, 425–26
- Hindu–Muslim unity, 490
- Hindus in Bahawalpur, 318
- Hitler, 35
 - and British, distinction between, 320–21
- honesty, 295
- human consciousness, merging in the divine consciousness, 228, 230
- identity and memory, 115
- India,
 - after Gandhi, 136
 - copying the West, 89, 136
- Indian tradition, 257
- indigo plantations in Champaran, 64–65
- individual, as part of universal divine, 336
- industry, decentralization of, 127
- Islam and Sufism, 217
- Jains, 257
- Janata Party, formation of, 314
- Jayaprakash Narayan, movement in Bihar, 405
- Jesus, picture of, in Sevagram, 284
- jihad*, 198
- Jinnah, 187
 - and Gandhi, conflict between, 269
- Kalelkar, Kakasaheb, 216, 251
- karma*, 95, 96, 146, 279, 379
 - freedom within, 145
 - law of, 337, 475
- Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, 304
- Kasturba Health Society, 304
- Kasturba Trust, 417–20, 421, 447
- Kasturba,
 - as a *yogini*, 233
 - satyagraha* of, 191
 - unmelted bangles of, 233–34
- Kaur, Rajkumari Amrit, 343
- Khadi Commission, formation of, 356
- khadi*, 24, 177, 212
 - Gandhi's bias towards, 361
 - importance of, 122, 490–93
 - meaning of, 289
- Khan, Khan Saheb Abdul Gaffar (Frontier Gandhi), 218–19
- Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, 25, 61
- Kripalani, J.B., 8, 9, 12, 26, 59–154
 - association with the Congress, 24, 61, 153
 - charitable institution funded by, 137–38
 - commitment to Gandhi's ideas, 60
 - dismissal from service, 67
 - education and career of, 59
 - first meeting with Gandhi, 59, 62

- involvement in nationalist movement, 60
- life and works of, 59–62
- marriage of, with Sucheta Mazumdar, 60–61
- on *brahmacharya*, 37
- on Gandhi's fasts, 33
- on Gandhi's stand on religion, 45
- on Gandhi's ways of thinking and working, 43
- on Gandhian philosophy, 62
- on masculine and feminine in Gandhi, 41
- on *satyagraha*, 35
- personal details of, 149–54
- Kripalani, Sucheta, 8, 9, 10, 26, 409–522
- commitment to Gandhian ideology, 22
- differences with Gandhi, 22–23
- first meeting with Gandhi, 429
- involvement with Indian National Congress, 410
- keenness to go to jail, 441–42
- leaving University work, 440
- life and works of, 409–12
- marriage to J.B. Kripalani, 22–23, 409–10
- meeting with Gandhi in Aga Khan Palace jail 512–14
- on *brahmacharya*, 38
- on Gandhi's relations with women, 41
- on Gandhi's stand on religion, 45
- on masculine and feminine in Gandhi, 41
- on the impact of fasts, 34
- on understanding Gandhi, 21
- positions held by, 411
- work for refugees, 433
- work in Noakhali, 413–16
- work in villages, 420
- experience in disturbed areas, 15
- kshatriya*, 485
- kumkum*, importance of, 188–89
- Lage Raho Munnabhai*, 1, 27
- Lannoy, R., 81
- law,
 - objective–subjective meaning of, 92
 - significances of, 91
- life,
 - after death, 470
 - as one without compartments, 345
 - Indian and American ways of, 277
- Lohia, 443
- love and sex, 276
- lust and feeling, difference between, 241
- Maharaj, Shri Ravi Shankar, 216
- Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, 304
- Mahatma vs Gandhi*, 1
- Mahila Ashram, 435
- Manu, on women, 483
- maya*, 239
- menial work, improving the conditions of, 353–54
- mind and soul, 98
- modesty, 267
- Mohammed, Lord, 232
- moksha*, 470, 475
- moral law, 91

- morality, 106
- Muslims,
 - and Gandhiji, 216, 218
 - expectations of *sultan*ic power by, 187
- Narayan, Jayaprakash, 25
- national flag, 221
- national schools, 250
- nature and soul, 381
- natures, types of, 381
- Nayar, Sushila, 8, 9, 13, 26, 301–50
 - as a minister, 311, 312
 - as Speaker, 312
 - experience in Noakhali, 15
 - first meeting with Gandhi, 14, 301, 305, 306–08
 - life and works of, 301–04, 311–14
 - on *brahmacharya*, 37
 - on Gandhi's relations with women, 40
 - on masculine and feminine in Gandhi, 41, 42
 - visit,
 - to Muslim refugees in Purana Quila, 324
 - to Noakhali, 326
- Nehru government, functioning against Gandhi's principles 235–36
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, disagreements with Gandhi, 136
- Niebuhr, Reinhold, on Gandhi, 35
- nirvana*, 378–79
- Noakhali, 477
 - Sucheta Kripalani's work in, 448
 - travel to, 422–25
- Non-cooperation Movement, 68, 70
 - in Bardoli, 69–70
- non-violence, 263, 329, 406, 505
 - and non-violent resistance, distinction between, 77
 - argument on, between Kripalani and Gandhi, 74–75
 - concept of, 27
 - Dada Dharmadhikari on, 34
 - demands on people, 106, 271
 - Gandhi on, 30
 - importance of, 27
 - J.B. Kripalani on, 34
 - non-workability of, 180, 181
 - of Christ, 95
 - penetration of, 140
- non-violent suffering, 338
- opposites, importance of, 148
 - synthesizing of, 78
- organized religion, 254
- Pakistan, 188
- Parekh, Bhikhu, 28
- parents, respect for, 466
- paramatma*, 379
- Partition, 317
- Patel, Jhaver, 8, 10, 13, 23, 26, 351–408
 - arrests of, 367
 - books by, 353
 - disagreements with Gandhi, 24, 361
 - first meeting with Gandhi, 14, 355
 - impression of Gandhi, 357, 358
 - life and works of, 351–54
 - on *brahmacharya*, 38

- on current status of Gandhian movement 24
- on fasts, 33
- on Gandhi's relations with women, 40
- on masculine and feminine in Gandhi, 41
- on *satyagraha*, 35
- Patwardhan, Achyut, 443
- people, types of, 362
- personal God, 382
- political conversion, 218
- political parties, as conspiracy against people, 253
- political work, and village life, difference between, 22
- politics,
 - and ethics, relation between, 26
 - content and form of, 13
 - spirituality of, 105
- power, obsession with, 186–88
- Praja Socialist Party, 61
- prayer meetings, 282, 386, 467–68, 481
- principle and practice, difference between, 370
- pardah* 112
- Quit India Movement, 73, 183
- Rawalpindi, riots in, 448
- real *satyagrahis*, 199
- refugees, from Punjab, 449–50
- reincarnation 96, 114–15, 146–147, 337, 340, 363
- relative truth, 94
- Religion and Development in Asian Society, conference on, 57
- Research Center for Group Dynamics, 55
- rice mills, closure of, 366
- Rolland, Romain, 3
- Roy,
 - Aruna, 26
 - Ram Mohan, 471
- rural situation, strategies for changing, 354
- Rurban Community*, 360
- sabotage activities, 444
- sacrificing, importance of, 107, 477, 478
- sadhana*, spiritual practices, 168, 169, 337
- salt *satyagraha*, 72, 173
- salt tax, importance of, 72–73
- samadhi*, 228
- Sarabhai, Mridula, 467
- sarvadharmasamabhava*, 386
- sarvodaya*, 32, 251, 348, 388
- Satyagraha Ashram (Sabarmati),
 - change of name, 297–98
- satyagraha*, 21, 30–37, 90, 107, 124, 162, 172–73, 179–80, 186–87, 219, 229, 269, 462
 - as a dialectic, 225, 266
 - as a way of life, 224
 - change in, 457
 - change of hearts due to, 339
 - courage for, 334–35
 - effect of, 222, 223
 - essence of, 32, 197–98, 368
 - Gandhi's theory of, 30–31
 - in Champaran, 331
 - ineffectiveness of, 224
 - meaning of, 264, 454
 - non-cooperation aspect of, 458
 - positive nature of, 185
 - strategy of, 370
- science, essence of, 126

Second World War, 68
 self-control, 111
 self-employment, Gandhi's belief
 in, 390
 self-love, 92
 self-purification, 272
 self-realization, 100, 111
 self-regulating society, 486
 self-sufficiency, 401
 Sevagram, 143
 establishment of medical
 college in, 23
 sex, experiments on, 275
sharana bhava (atma samarpana),
 226
 Shaw, George Bernard, 260
 simplicity, importance of, 215
 sin, meaning of, 285
 social consciousness, 453
 social individual, freedom of, 93
 social order, Gandhi's idea of,
 29, 495
 Social Responsibilities of
 Business, conference on, 56
 Socialist Party, 61
 Society of Friends, 54
 society, visualized by Gandhi,
 504
 spirit and matter, 99
 spiritual body, 100
 spirituality, 106
 states' reorganization, 312
 Sucheta and Kripalani,
 oppositions to marriage of,
 435–37
 suffering, meaning of, 286, 516
 suppression by British, 445
swadeshi, 177, 290
swadharma, 45, 134
 Swaraj Party, formation of, 71

swaraj, 101, 298, 502–03
 Gandhi on, 44
 Tagore, Rabindranath, 14, 104,
 159
tapasya, 95
 technology,
 Gandhi on, 125, 126,
 391–92, 495
 ideas on, 290
 problems of, 359
 synthesis of, 359, 360, 392
 Terchek, Prof. Ronald, 4
The Dreams, 330–31
The Gandhian Way, 62
 The New Era Centre, 58
 theory and practice, bridges
 between, 42
 time, 232, 279
*Towards a Democratic Work
 Process* 54
 town–rural cooperative township,
 360
 traditional Indian society, 482
 trusteeship, 123, 128, 288, 389,
 487–88
 Truth is God, 93, 382–83
 truth, importance to Gandhi,
 464
 Tyabji family, 40, 170
 Tyabji,
 Abbas, 155
 Badruddin, 155
 Raihana, 8, 9, 13, 26,
 155–242
 contribution of, to
 nationalist movement,
 156–57
 criticism of Gandhi by,
 19–21

- first meeting with Gandhi, 14, 156, 158–59
- Gandhi's influence on, 174
- impression on Gandhi, 16, 159–60, 162
- jail life of, 183–84
- letter to Viceroy on liquor, 157–58
- life and works of, 155–158
- on *brahmacharya*, 38
- on the rigidity of non-violence, 33
- underground activities, 445
- unity of life, 267
- universal consciousness, 277
- universal scheme of things, 149
- universe, working of, 145
- untouchability, 107, 139
- Vaishnav* and Jain communities, animosity between, 207–08
- values, changes in, 289
- varna*, 117, 254, 287
- varnadharma*, 484, 496
- Vedant*, 79
- Vedas*, 79
- Vigil*, weekly, 62
- village industries, and handicrafts, destruction of, 393
- need to establish, 427
- villages, working in, 196, 421
- Vinoba, 216, 520
- violence,
 - abstinence from thought of, 198
 - forms and contexts of, 28
 - in Gandhi, 364
- Wardha, 250
- warrants, types of, 442
- Wavell, Lord, 4
- women,
 - as more non-violent than men, 112
 - as more submissive, 396
 - bias against, 483
 - department for, 441
 - Gandhi's attitude towards, 111, 291, 293, 394, 395, 483, 484, 509, 510
 - in freedom struggle, 213, 332
 - role of, 39–42
 - self-respect of, 419
- work,
 - creativity in, 499–500
 - dignity of, 498, 499
 - Gandhi's attitude towards, 130
 - meaning of, 130
- Yeravada Pact, 373
- yoga* 82
- yogic* consciousness, 175
- Youth League of Kadi, 204

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This excellent volume fills a gap in the extensive literature on Gandhi. It provides valuable information and insights and assists a balanced and just critical assessment of him. As the editors show, Gandhi still has much to offer to contemporary India's struggle to create a just society and a healthy and self-critical political culture.

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